ESSAYS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN HISTORY

ELMER TRUESDELL MERRILL

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ESSAYS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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PREFACE

THE title-page and table of contents of this book will show clearly that it does not profess to be a connected history of the Early Church. The choice of scattered topics is due to the fact that these especial themes happened to be of particular interest to the writer, and he thought that at least some of them needed other, or fuller and more critical, elucidation than they had apparently received elsewhere in print. In a number of cases he was dissatisfied with the assumptions or evaluation of evidence that he found almost universally accepted with little question by ecclesiastical historians. Therefore he has tried to write from what may be called the standpoint of a classicist rather than of an ecclesiastic, though he himself happens to be also an ecclesiastic, and may unconsciously lay himself open to some like criticism to that which he now and then directs against his fellows.

Three or four of the topics discussed in this volume have already been treated by the same writer in one or another technical journal. But such articles have now been so much revised and modified that their author would be glad to have the earlier publication forgotten —as it probably has been, and to no one's injury.

Circumstances have made it necessary for the writer to read the proofs of these pages at a distance of more than two thousand miles from his study, and hence all citations and many statements have had to go without the proper final verification. But much care was taken with the preparation of the copy, and the printing has been so skilful and accurate that it is hoped few errors of importance in these matters have been left to worry the reader's patience and to cause the writer consequent mortification.

ELMER TRUESDELL MERRILL.

November 1, 1923.

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CHAPTER I

ON MATERIALS AND METHODS

The classicist properly regards the entire field of ancient Greek and Roman life as his peculiar domain. But in recent times he has shown himself disposed to surrender voluntarily certain portions of it to other students. He views with equanimity the gradual appropriation of ancient history by the modern clan of professed historical teachers who are without any but the most ordinary equipment of classical training, and to whom the ancient period furnishes only a subordinate topic. With the pagan religions of antiquity the classicist displays a very active and sympathetic concern. They are objects of his constant and fruitful study. As a result our knowledge of their inner content and of their outer relations has been advanced during the past generation in a very marked degree. But that other religion, unique in its characteristics and intolerant in its genius, which started in the reign of Tiberius among a small and insignificant group of despised Galileans, began a career of active and world-wide propaganda, speedily came into contact with the Roman power, aroused in it first perplexity and then resentment, and after nearly three centuries of struggle forced that imperious organism to confess itself overpowered and to make a treaty of perpetual alliance—that religion, with all its marvellous history, does not occupy the attention of the professed classicist to the same degree. His

attitude toward it, if Christianity be considered merely as an historical phenomenon, is doubtless illogical, but after all not unnatural. This is an age of specialisation. The critical scholar must severely limit his field. None but the classicist is as a rule disposed to deal with the history of the ethnic religions of antiquity. On the other hand, Christianity has enlisted its own group of specialised students of its origins and of its later developments. To their more intensive cultivation the classicist has been for the most part thankfully content to abandon the field that is by nature as much his as theirs.

It certainly would be a misfortune if ecclesiastics and other students of Church history were to manifest no interest in the early life of Christianity as a factor in the pagan society of the day. It would be a misfortune if they did not contribute all at their command to illuminate what is unfortunately a very insufficiently understood subject. But it may nevertheless be a cause for regret that they should so generally be the only investigators in that field. The classicist is perhaps the best-equipped student of the pagan religions of the Roman world, not because he is himself a pagan, but precisely because he is not one. He may not be able to feel the austere beauty of the best that those religions could reveal with the enthusiasm with which a Julian felt it, but he can at least study and write *sine ira et studio*. He has no thesis of any sort to sustain, or at any rate he is not antecedently bound to one, consciously or unconsciously. He may be himself a Christian by personal conviction and by the long inheritance of the centuries. But ancient paganism is a thing so far removed from him as to have lost the elements of controversial challenge. He can treat it as dispassionately as an American may now treat, and sometimes does, the War of the Revolution; as generously as a victorious commander may later describe the merits of a vanquished foe. He

cannot possibly be justly suspected of reproducing in his own emotions the unavoidable attitude toward it of an early Christian apologist.

It might be true *per contra* that the best expounder of early Christian history, at least in its external aspects and relations, would be a pagan. Indeed, some excellent work in that field has been done in modern times by men who doubtless would justly resent being called pagans, but who distinctly disclaimed the name of Christian. It would be at least ungracious to challenge the good faith of their profession of impartiality of disposition and attitude. But unfortunately it has yet been the general feeling of readers without conscious bias that their actual writings are not plainly free from a flavour of hostility.

This judgement is perhaps inevitable. The grave difficulty in the case appears to have a very antique origin. It is a survival from the fact that while the ancient Roman of education might view with perfect courtesy and careless amiability a cult which he did not personally profess, the Christian could not possibly return the compliment by similar inner tolerance of the cult of his pagan contemporary. Christianity was by its very nature and commission an actively proselyting and intolerant system. It challenged hostility and opposition, and did not hesitate to exhibit them. The first two of the Mosaic commandments appeared to the Christian to be proclaimed as the divine prohibition to all ages and all mankind. The other religions of the ancient world were cults. Men lived among them, but few men lived by them or for them, and practically none were called upon to die for them. Christianity was a faith, by which and for which men lived, and for which many died. However much Christianity in these modern days may seem to have lost the overpowering sense of its vital mission of propaganda, it still retains one of its ancient marks. It does not appear able to regard even its

early history in an impersonal way, as a purely scholastic subject, that may be handled, and should be handled, as freely and dispassionately as the secular history of antiquity. Nothing that pertains to Christianity is quite free from an indefinable but enveloping and protective halo of religion, of piety, or reverence. Even the modern Christian investigator dealing with Christian origins is apt, however unconsciously, to be always looking out from his subject upon an encircling hostile world, rather than looking into his subject from a perfectly neutral position. It is well that religion has this firm hold upon the unconscious minds of men; but it does introduce a difficulty into their activities as scholars. The Christian dealing as a specialist with Christian subjects, even when they are purely historical and not theological, is sometimes held to be in danger of developing what is called "an ecclesiastical temper of mind." It does not appear just what this affliction is. Its manifestation may be perhaps what led Lord Clarendon to his petulant utterance about the mental characteristics of clergymen as a class. The professed classicist, who, even though he is not a pagan of any age, yet is so constantly busy with purely pagan antiquity as to be reasonably free from ecclesiastical predilections, has been heard to put the matter in a somewhat different way. In his occasional moments of self-conscious virtue he sometimes affirms that the professed student of early Christian history, in the solicitous attempt to build up a comely structure out of very defective and scattered material, is lamentably inclined to disregard the ordinary rules and principles of historical evidence; that he is willing for the sake of his cause to welcome as valid testimony such as he would not for a moment dream of accepting, if he were dealing with any other class of subjects; that, however competent he may otherwise be as a scholar, when he touches upon matters connected with Christian antiquities, he too

frequently appears to slip, though unconsciously, from the chair of record and of judgement into that of some special advocacy; and that the whole fabric of generally accepted early Christian history is influenced in its constitution by such an erroneous spirit.

Now this censure expressed by the occasional classicist may be wrong; if expressed as a universal judgement, it certainly would be unjustifiable. But there is some apparent basis for it, and "the ecclesiastical mind," if there be such a thing, can hardly afford to disregard it as a mere slander. It is at any rate supported by precise specifications, which, however, need not be discussed here. Certain of them may become apparent in the pages that follow, in which a professed classicist without conscious ecclesiastical prejudice attempts, at any rate, to discuss certain topics connected with early Christian history in the same way in which he would examine any other matters lying within his proper historical field, quite without regard to their possible religious connotations.

It is quite likely that the intelligent reader of early Christian history who has never busied himself with the study of sources may not realise upon what a slight and insecure foundation of substantially contemporary evidence the superstructure of the narrative of the first two centuries is perforce erected. References to Christianity in the works of pagan writers of that whole period may be numbered on the fingers of one hand. They will all be considered in the succeeding chapters of this book. Of writings by Christians there are of course more, but in amount there is much less than the casual reader might imagine, and in regard to much of it there are most puzzling questions yet unanswered. At least there is no consensus of Christian scholars about many of them. These questions concern not merely matters of date and interpretation, but in a number of cases more serious considerations of authenticity. Only a single document, beyond the

four that describe the life and teachings of the divine Founder, is in the form of an historical narrative—the Acts of the Apostles. That, however precious in content, by no means gives an account of the general history of the Church during even the limited period that it covers. Items bearing on this topic have to be gleaned from the rest of the authentic literature, which for the first half of the period under discussion consists chiefly of a few theological tractates, often in the form of exhortatory letters, and for the second half, mainly of apologetic arguments against the attacks of heathenism or of heresy. The total amount of historical information that can be derived from all these sources is at best very scanty. Much of it also lies under doubt because of the tendencies just mentioned.

As we pass the middle of the second century, with the increase of literary activity among Christian writers the condition of things from a critical standpoint becomes not better but distinctly worse. For that was the birth-time of a lamentable mass of writing which took as its text things already set down, whether truly or falsely, in this or that place, and upon these elaborated a congeries of fables, building one upon another with nothing but imagination to draw upon. *Fingunt simul creduntque.* This sort of work went on for more than a single century. It is not easy to pass a sure verdict on the literary morality of the motives underlying it. To call the process altogether deliberate falsification would probably be unjust. Men in those days, and of the meagre intellectual training that appears to have belonged to the fabricators of the fanciful writings in question, may have had an adequate sense of truth and veracity in ordinary matters without at all comprehending that those qualities properly concern also statements or assumptions of facts in literature that may have an historical bearing. Sincere in spirit and purpose the authors probably were. They probably were convinced of the truth of the

statements and accounts upon which they founded their prodigious elaborations. Perhaps one ought not to say that they wrote in defence of anything, or with primary intent to add to the strength of any theory. For so far as we can determine the matter from the character of what has been preserved, they were for the most part rushing into no breach to meet actual assailants. They were merely writing edifying expansions of what no one had then any reason to doubt. History was the last thing they were intending to shape or to buttress, though it is the incidental history in their compositions that has especially attracted later attention. But to the authors their work was very probably not deliberately fictitious, in our modern sense of the word; it was rather in the nature of edifying exegetical and illustrative discourses by a present-day preacher.

Furthermore, it should be remembered that neither these writers nor their public had developed any critical historical sense. Whatever was anywhere or anyhow mentioned or recorded that fitted into the general scheme of their convictions, or at least did not conflict with it, was unhesitatingly accepted by them. In this respect they did not differ essentially from very many intelligent people of the present day. Again, an inference, however vague, however slightly founded, was quite as good to them as a fact. No complicated problems about sources had yet been formulated to harass their peaceful minds. However vexatious their ingenuousness is to the modern critic, it probably ought not to be set down as plain disingenuousness.

When the classicist faces certain of these fictitious documents—such, for example, as the professed letter of St. Peter to St. James, bishop of Jerusalem, or the alleged correspondence of Seneca with St. Paul—he is inclined to wonder whether, in spite of the small degree of talent that the writers display, their compositions were not perhaps in some measure influenced

by a form of training common enough in the ancient schools. Even the *grammatici* used for their elucidatory homilies material drawn from all sorts of sources, genuine and fictitious, while in the schools of the *rhetores* pupils were taught to compose on themes or situations from past history, or even in imitation of the manner or circumstances on some occasion of a distinguished orator or other historical personage. There were not yet (in the first two centuries) distinctively Christian schools, so far as we know, and none of the writings now under consideration can therefore be judged to be actual rhetorical exercises of the schools; but yet their character is such as to suggest the possibility of influence from that direction.

Much of this apocryphal literature of the early Christian centuries has doubtless vanished entirely, without leaving any discernible trace of itself or of its influence. Plenty of it remains. The fact that the final stage of the gradual determination of the canon of the New Testament excluded from that collection so much that was not entirely out of harmony of substance with what was ultimately included therein, may be taken as an indication that the better Christian scholarship of the fourth century perhaps understood the apocryphal documents of the latter half of the second century and later to be pious inventions of an edifying character. But that is not to say that the historical "facts" incidentally assumed or embodied in them were therefore, in the view of the Christian scholars of the fourth and following centuries, to be treated altogether as fabrications. Many of these "facts" were interesting in themselves, and did not conflict violently with anything else. Why should they not be accepted? Hardly a question was raised about any such matters.

On this general theme of apocryphal historical sources it will not be out of place to quote certain remarks of two modern scholars:

"There is a class of composition which is not history, and is not conscious fiction—it was produced in old times; it is produced in our times; it will be produced wherever and as long as human society exists—something which honestly believes itself to be fact, and is created, nevertheless, by the imagination. . . . In certain conditions of mind the distinction between objective and subjective truth has no existence. An impression is created that it is fit, right, or likely that certain things should take place, and the outward fact is assumed to correspond with that impression. When a man feels no doubt, he makes no inquiry, for he sees no occasion for it; yet his conviction is as complete as the most searching investigation could have made it. His own feeling that something is true is to him complete evidence that it is true." [1]

"The Roman believed that even if his religion were not true, it was a good thing for moral influence over the people. The Roman Church seems more concerned also about the moral influence than about the truth of some of its teachings. So the early inventors of ecclesiastical myths were not exercised about historical truth." [2]

If the unprejudiced classicist were to set out to write a chapter in profane history, and should confront the basic difficulty that a number of the documents on which he would naturally depend were by no means free from the charge by generally competent critics of being later forgeries, or at least tainted by editorial revisions and interpolations, he might not surrender his task in despair of possible fulfilment, but he certainly would exercise the most extreme caution in the use of such questionable material. He has the right to expect similar care and self-restraint on the part of modern writers on early ecclesiastical history. He does not always find it. Especially is a clear head and a pure mind requisite in dealing with the early centuries of the Church, because so many conclusions of the gravest religious importance are now held by multitudes of Christians to depend on the

[1] J. A. Froude, "The Oxford Counter-Reformation," in *Short Studies*, vol. iv. pp. 209, 212.
[2] R. H. Hutton, *Theological Essays*, p. 387.

history and interpretation of that primitive period. Most of these perilous topics, however, will not be touched upon in this group of essays.

But of course not all the source-material that historians may use need be contemporary with the period treated. It often is the case that later documents were based on earlier written material that has now disappeared, and these secondary sources may be drawn upon to some advantage in the lack of the original authorities. There is also to be considered the question whether genuine, trustworthy, and important oral tradition may not in some instances have survived the period of its origin, and have contributed materially to record at some considerably later time. And finally it may appear possible for the historian to employ a sort of inductive method, and to reconstruct what must have been true in an earlier period on the basis of later conditions for which he finds unexceptionable evidence. Some remarks may be permitted on each of these three heads, taking them up in inverse order.

It was remarked of a certain great naturalist that he could reconstruct a prehistoric animal from the study of a single one of its bones. But there is also the story of the mythical Frenchman who needed no bone at all as a starting-point, but could shape his reproduction from his own vivid imagination of what the extinct creature ought dramatically to have looked like. The historian of ecclesiastical origins cannot safely work in his field with the justified assurance of a Cuvier. There are too many possibilities in human affairs of erroneous interpretation. His natural temptation to make the most out of the extant little puts him in constant danger of resembling more nearly the brilliant excogitator of entirely gratuitous mythological creations. There is need of the most extreme caution in the use of historical inductions. They should be resorted to only in rare instances, and then with the

clearest understanding that the results reached are at best hypothetical, and particularly that these conclusions cannot properly be made the basis for subsequent deductions, unless they are supported by a considerable amount of facts which cannot probably be explained by any other theory. If the amount of this supporting evidence is very slight, and especially if it is plainly equivocal, the investigator ought surely to have the courage of honesty, and to confess his inability to bring his work to an agreeable completeness. Sentimental desire to perfect a picture by the use of brilliant colour where the delineation is yet of necessity defective, is certainly not the proper passion of an historical student, though it is sometimes his weakness.

Confronted by the lamentable meagreness of extant material from which to reconstruct the early history of the Church, modern students have not unnaturally been anxious to make the most of what they had at command. They have often shown themselves extremely reluctant to surrender their grasp on any ancient statement that, if it were only true, would be of interest and value for their purpose. They find in accounts of one sort or another, written perhaps as much as two or three centuries after the events concerned, certain allegements that are otherwise unsupported, and are of a character that might expose them to doubt or challenge. Instead of rejecting these as probably due ultimately to misinterpretation or to rhetorical invention, the modern investigators retain them, and justify themselves by postulating the existence of an oral tradition for the substantiation of the accounts. Now it cannot be too strongly asserted that the existence of such an amount of genuine early tradition independent of written sources cannot readily be taken for granted; its claim to recognition must be supported by probable evidence; and the burden of proof rests on those who would affirm its existence. And of this existence there

is hardly an atom of valid evidence. This is precisely what an unprejudiced observer would expect. For the antecedent probability is strongly against the postulation so warmly asserted by the ecclesiastical students who are unwilling to throw aside any of the scanty material which they or their predecessors have so painfully collected, and which they guard with jealous care and treat with reverential solicitude. Those early Christians were for the most part a very simple and uneducated folk. We are much interested in their history; there is no reason at all to suppose that they were. Their pagan contemporaries of similar station were not interested in history. Modern persons of like capacities resemble them in that respect. The genuine early Christian literature, apostolic and sub-apostolic, with the exception in the initial period of the Acts and, purely in an incidental way, of the Gospels, shows no concern at all with history. It shows much concern with just two things, faith and order. First and foremost of these two things of prime importance was the faith, the doctrinal teaching of Christianity, on which its claim to existence and acceptance ultimately rested. Subordinate to this was the order of the Church, which was the responsible machinery for the conservation and propagation of the faith. Of these two things a definite tradition was built up. This work, with that of propaganda, gave the Churches all they could do, and evidently occupied all of their interest. The tradition of doctrine was fortified, however, even so by written treatises, and to these it constantly referred.[1] With the passing away of that generation of men which "saw the Lord," and of their immediate successors, there seems to have been joined the general disappearance of anything like oral historical traditions.

[1] Irenaeus (ap. Eus. *H.E.* v. 20 [238-9]) relates that Polycarp told in his hearing much about Jesus that he in turn had heard from St. John and others who had seen the Lord; but even so, Irenaeus appeals to the written records for substantiation of this oral tradition (*πάντα σύμφωνα ταῖς γραφαῖς*).

While they lasted, they were subservient to the purposes of doctrine. Documents now took their place, and these also (with the exceptions mentioned) treated of doctrine, not of history. And indeed, why should there be any especial interest in local Church history among men who were firmly convinced that the order of this world was speedily to pass away in a cosmic conflagration?

About the middle of the second century, when the belief in the imminent Second Advent of the Lord had lost its sway, there appears the first glimmer of interest in the ecclesiastical history of the preceding hundred years. It emerges at about the same time that in the West (the East may have met the dawn somewhat earlier) [1] the ruling episcopate also emerges above the level of the common presbytero-episcopate. The two events may have had—probably did have—some organic connection, but the discussion of it must not delay us at this point. The earliest post-apostolic indication of interest in Church history is contained in the writings of a single man, Hegesippus, which are known to us chiefly by a few references and excerpts made a century and a half later by Eusebius. Hegesippus travelled westward from Syria as far as Rome, taking several years for his journey, and making stops at various places on the way. He was evidently interested in all that concerned the local history of the Churches in the cities through which he passed. It is just as clear (except to those who read the testimony with an ecclesiastical prepossession) that he found very little extant among them in the way of documentary evidence or oral tradition to satisfy his curiosity; and it is on the other hand tolerably certain that instead of gleaning facts from the local traditions of the several Churches, he himself furnished these groups of believers

[1] The probability of this depends chiefly, though not entirely, on the genuineness of the letters of Ignatius so strongly upheld by Lightfoot and others. About this question the present writer must yet confess to the retention of grave doubts.

from his own conjectures and interpretations with something to fill up the vacancy in their knowledge of their own annals. The work of a second man, Iulius Africanus, though even less known to us, appears also to have been not without influence in the same direction.

Not only have modern writers assumed altogether unwarrantably the existence of such definite and accurate oral tradition as they desiderated, but they have also fondly imagined that the Churches must have had from the beginning local records and "archives" in which the more important events in their experience were set down, and which, therefore, served as the basis for such later appearing statements as would otherwise arouse in our minds natural suspicion of their being due to mere invention or illegitimate inference. Here again the burden of proof rests upon those who would postulate the existence of such "archives." The postulate has been made of especial importance by being used chiefly to bolster up the later developed claims concerning the early history of just one Church, that in Rome.

A recent and learned writer on the earliest days of Christianity speaks regretfully of the loss of the first-century "archives" of the Church in Rome, which have unfortunately "perished by fire or other accident." It apparently seems to him (and I suspect most writers on the subject would agree with him) perfectly self-evident that there must have existed such "archives" in the infant days of the Roman Church. He is quite as certain of it (though there is no evidence of such a thing) as I should be that any old-fashioned New England debating society would at the very beginning of its organisation buy a record-book and start in to keep minutes of its meetings. We do not well to translate our modern imitative habits, and our eager interest in the local history of the ancient Churches, and our appreciation of the importance of the subject,

into a belief that those primitive Christians must have felt (because it is such a pity if they did not) just as we do about such matters of possible record. Even in these enlightened days, after a tradition of centuries of canons and episcopal and archidiaconal visitations and such-like gentle compulsions, I have known parishes where the importance of keeping up the registers was quite unknown or ignored. In the infancy of the Christian Churches it is altogether probable that it was never felt. The early days of a first-century Church, composed chiefly of those not wise or mighty after the flesh, struggling for existence, sometimes persecuted, always despised, looking for the speedy end of the world, are not the days for the creation or development of an interest in local Church history, or of an appreciation of its future value and importance. There is no justification for the presumption (in the lack of evidence or of reasonable indication) that the local Churches for the first hundred years or so had any "archives" that included records of their life and adventures. All the presumption is in the negative direction.

A single parting suggestion may be adventured: if the Roman Church had possessed up to the middle of the second century such historical "archives," or such unwritten but genuine and accurate historical traditions, as has been popularly supposed, is it conceivable that in the second half of the same century such a mass of fantastic and impossible and now universally discredited and discarded stories could have been set afloat with any chance of gaining credence as we see exemplified in the Petrine and Clementine romances, to mention no others? or that there could have been such apparent doubt and known variations in the account of the early episcopal succession in Rome as we find at that time and later, even (according to St. Jerome)[1] in the Roman Church itself, and at so

[1] *De Vir. Ill.* 15.

late a date as the end of the fourth century, when beliefs about origins, whether well based or not, had at any rate generally settled into permanent shape ?

So in the inverse order we come to the consideration of the use by later writers of genuine documents that were extant in their day but have since disappeared. If we had at hand the historical or quasi-historical works of Hegesippus and Iulius Africanus, the matter would be of more practical importance than is actually the case. But in the lack of these we are thrown back almost entirely upon the early fourth-century historical writings of Eusebius of Caesarea. Extant Christian literature preceding his date is, with the exceptions already mentioned, so generally theological in character as to furnish us with very few purely historical items of value. Eusebius is the first extant writer of Church history since St. Luke (if St. Luke did indeed, as some good Christians have doubted or denied, compose the Acts of the Apostles). The influence of his history and chronology was predominant through all the mediaeval period. Christian writers who succeeded Eusebius were for the most part content to take him as their sole and only authority for ecclesiastical events before his time, and to piece him out by the activities of imagination. Only Sulpicius Seuerus, as is remarked elsewhere,[1] introduced statements taken from the *Annals* of Tacitus into his account of the Neronian persecution.[2] It should be observed that in thus ignoring possibly then extant earlier sources, these Christian historians were in their method not a whit inferior to their pagan contemporaries. Historical investigation had practically ceased among pagans and Christians alike. The fashion of mere epitomising

[1] P. 122.

[2] He also may have depended upon the now lost part of the fifth book of the *Histories* of Tacitus for his account of the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem by Titus, who, so Sulpicius declares, said he wished to make more easy the annihilation of both the Jewish and the Christian religions by destroying their common source (Sulp. Seu. *Chron.* ii. 30. 6, 7).

had begun. Therefore the only practical question is concerned with the use of his sources on the earlier period by Eusebius. Obviously any discussion of it to be given here must be limited to a few words.

Eusebius was evidently a studious reader. He was also a diligent collector of excerpts. We have every reason to be grateful to him for the frequency with which he records the actual words of earlier writers. To be sure, this fashion of his impairs the literary quality of his history, giving it too much the form of a not very artistic mosaic. If only the ancients had devised the voluminous footnote and appendix, with all their awkwardness, it might have been better for the residual form of some of the narratives composed by them. But the most serious difficulty with the work of Eusebius is not connected with form but with matter. Even in this he can hardly be blamed; for the fact is merely that he was not in critical insight and ability in advance of the other men of his age. They were all willing to accept as a part of authentic history any story, inference, or identification that conveniently fitted into their general scheme of belief. Eusebius naturally enough had the same tendency of mind. He recorded in his *Chronicles* and *Church History* almost anything suitable that he came across in earlier literature. It was to him all a part of indubitable tradition. He does, to be sure, set down some discussion about the authenticity of certain of the Christian writings current in his day. This is an indication of the weighing of evidence, or of belief, then going on that resulted in the determination of the New Testament canon. The judgement of Eusebius in these premises is not impeccable. But the main point is that he was not at all critical about historical matters.[1]

The chroniclers that followed, almost to a man,

[1] On the vacillation of his critical sense see the just remarks of Dr. Wm. Bright in the introduction to his edition of the *Ecclesiastical History* (ed. 2, pp. xlviii ff.).

reproduced Eusebius with perfect confidence. And too many modern writers on themes connected with Church history display with no like justification precisely the same attitude. They are unwilling to be hampered by the constantly recurring questions concerning ultimate source and probability with regard to any statement contained in Eusebius that fits into their preconceived historical scheme. If they find the same thing stated by, let us say, Jerome, Orosius, and Prosper, or any other group of the later writers who were but patently copying Eusebius, they triumphantly point to the palpable existence of "a unanimous and unassailable ancient tradition." No wonder the cavilling classicist suspects these moderns of being under the sway of the "ecclesiastical temper of mind." Every statement in Eusebius about the early period, where he quotes no authority with definiteness and precision, needs for the reasons before set down to be weighed with the most grave and cautious discrimination. If he distinctly quotes his authority, the same critical examination must be transferred from Eusebius to that professed source. And if the ultimate rejection of the alleged "fact" or inference must leave a disagreeable lacuna in an otherwise connected and pleasant narrative, or must work the necessary abandonment of some commonly accepted historical belief, that is surely nothing to the point. All this is only the common sense of impartial historical investigation. It ought to be unnecessary to reaffirm it.

And this leads to the apparently pertinent reaffirmation of yet another item of critical commonplace, that is indeed essentially included in what has just been remarked. No repetition of a professed historical statement down through a succession of writers produces the slightest increment in its evidential value, if each successive writer had apparently nothing but the statement of his predecessor or predecessors

on which to found his own: on the contrary, such accounts, especially (one may regret to say) in the case of early ecclesiastical writers, tend in the course of frequent repetition to accumulate about themselves accretions of amiable and pious imagination that too frequently have imposed upon eager credulity as of equal authority with the original nuclear statement, and the whole conglomeration has been accepted as truth—and this even when the foundation on which all this superstructure of romance has been erected may well have been only a guess or an unwarrantable inference. This phenomenon is of course due to the extreme interest that zealous students take and have taken in piecing together early Church history, and to their perfectly human reluctance to discard, but on the contrary their eagerness to magnify and adorn, any possible fragment, when so little has been preserved from the times concerned, and (in modern days) destructive criticism seems continually to be making that little less. As an example of an expanding body of mere repetitions, I have pointed out elsewhere [1] that for a whole millennium after Eusebius every single statement (fortunately in this case not complicated by pious accretions) about the persecution of Christians in Bithynia under Pliny dates back to Eusebius alone, while his account depends solely on that of Tertullian. This is a pertinent example of the occasional evidential value of what is sometimes called "a unanimous and unbroken Christian tradition." The many witnesses are reducible to just one, and that one not contemporary with the events, but relying upon a yet earlier person's report of them, and apparently misunderstanding that in certain details.[2]

[1] "Zur frühen Überlieferungsgeschichte des Briefwechsels zwischen Plinius und Trajan," in *Wiener Studien*, xxxi. 250 ff.

[2] Cf. Prof. J. B. Bury in the Introduction (p. xlvi) to his edition of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*: "The untrained historian fails to recognize that nothing is added to the value of a statement of Widukind by its repetition by Thietmar or Ekkehard, and that a record in the Continuation of Theophanes gains no further credibility from the fact that it likewise occurs in Cedrenus, Zonaras, or Glycas."

It is impossible to formulate any general criterion whereby a genuine historical tradition may with certainty be discriminated from a myth assuming the guise of history. Even true statements sometimes tend to accumulate about themselves mythical elements. Thus the accounts of Jesus Christ in the Gospels were supplemented in the myth-making days of the second and third centuries by such pure inventions as the so-called "Gospel of the Birth of Mary," the "Protevangelion," and the "Gospel of the Infancy," finally and rightly rejected by the early Church. Yet certain considerations may be not without value in this connection. We may justly expect that a genuine early tradition, not stereotyped by speedy commission to written record, will exist in fuller and more circumstantial detail in the days nearest its actual source; that with the attrition of time and the decay of living memory it will lose more or less of its non-essential details; and that finally it will either disappear altogether, or, if it is deemed of importance, will survive in only the bare kernel of its original form. On the other hand the progress of a mythical invention, based on nothing more than a mere conjecture, a pious guess, or an analogical suggestion, is often in the early ages directly the contrary of this. The former is a process of devolution, the latter of involution. *Vires acquirit eundo.* Its plausibility comes to be supported and enhanced by accretions of conjectural and fitting detail, until it assumes a well-rounded and protected structure. It is likely also to branch out into varieties of shape. When, therefore, we are confronted in the course of historical research by a story which, however comely and agreeable in itself, appears to start from a foundation intrinsically or extrinsically dubitable, and to exhibit such a manner of growth and development as has just been indicated, extreme caution is demanded in dealing with it. We need sometimes carefully to inquire *Cui bono?* Some writers on early ecclesiastical

history apparently assume an attitude quite the reverse of this. With their implicit faith in the early existence of now vanished "archives," and of accurate oral tradition of purely historical matters (there is no question raised here about the validity of doctrinal traditions), they carry to an extreme their confidence in their own variety of the evolutionary doctrine of the "survival of the fittest." They make no distinction in this respect between purely historical "traditions" and those of faith and order. They may not agree with Cardinal Manning's vehement dictum that the appeal to history is treason, but yet, if a purely historical statement has been assertively proclaimed and very widely believed through centuries, they feel bound to accept it, without investigating impartially its ultimate source and consequent validity. To this extent, at least, they are pure pragmatists and not historians.

Yet another error in method is of close kinship with that just mentioned. The propriety and necessity of examining ancient evidence in its proper chronological perspective is too frequently disregarded by historical students, especially when dubitable matters of early Church history are concerned. Investigators are sometimes prone to gather up and jumble all together into a single congeries scraps of testimony educed from a number of widely separated ancient sources, disregarding the order and chronological intervals of their respective first appearances in extant record, which might suggest or make clear a possible dependence of one upon the other. Such a procedure is likely to be seriously fallacious. It has just been remarked that, in the absence of valid contemporary evidence of a certain event, a much later guess or inference, such as we might ourselves make, and with just as much actual knowledge to go upon as the ancient proponent had at his command, tends by its inherently agreeable character to gather about itself envelopes of circumstantial detail, and finally through

the innocent incubation of protracted repetitions to issue as a "universally held and unchallenged belief." All ancient "traditions" call for careful examination of their chronological development, and it is generally well to examine the witnesses in the order of their first appearance, and not all together nor indiscriminately. Only thus can error be detected and avoided. And if such a process leads perhaps to the definite abandonment of some clamorous "universal belief," what of it? The hoary and previously respected impostor has been detected and remanded to the limbo of fabrications. That is all. Why shudder at the emergence of truth, even if it does disturb comfortably settled and amiable prepossessions? It was the wise Roger Bacon who numbered among the four *maxima comprehendendae ueritatis offendicula* that of *consuetudinis diuturnitas*.

Furthermore, in dealing with a field in which the evidence is at best fragmentary, and often doubtful on one ground or another, there is an additional and subtle danger in reasoning to be avoided. A collection of evidence may be truly cumulative, being the sum of a considerable number of items, not one of which may be strong enough to be trusted to stand alone, and yet of which the combined power is sufficient to support quite a weight. But there may also be a series of weak particulars, each one of which might be of some slight value in adding verisimilitude to a conclusion already established as at least probable on reasonable evidential grounds, but of which catena no single item possesses in any degree whatever the essential quality of independent evidence. Such a group of particulars is clearly of no value at all for the original construction of any inference or theory. The mathematician may sometimes proffer the ecclesiastical historian a wholesome corrective and tonic by reminding him that zeros may be added to zeros indefinitely without the sum attaining any assignable value.

Of course no single writer of any consequence whatever is likely to fall by mischance into all or perhaps into many of the errors of method that have been noted in this chapter. But if a specific instance is required of what may happen to even the best of scholars, let me quote a brief paragraph taken almost at random from the greatest work of one of the finest type of scholars of the past generation, a man of eminence justly recognised in all countries where sacred studies are in honour. I am not here concerned with the truth or falsity of his conclusions in themselves, but only with the character of the evidence and reasoning on which he based them. He wrote as follows:

"The prophecy in John xxi. 18 '*When thou shalt grow old, thou shalt stretch out thy hands and another shall gird thee*, this he said signifying by what death he should die,' has always been explained of the crucifixion of S. Peter; and it is difficult to see what other explanation can be given. Nothing, it is true, is here said about the place of martyrdom. But the crucifixion of S. Peter is always connected by tradition with Rome, and with no other place. It would be arbitrary therefore to separate the locality from the manner of martyrdom. Unless we accept the Roman residence of S. Peter, we know nothing about his later years and death."

Of this short paragraph the first sentence contains an example of that ever vivacious and active phenomenon, the historical "fallacy of the unanimous tradition." The biblical scholar and the ordinary Christian may, if they choose, take both the record of our Lord's words and the interpretation appended to them by the evangelist as equally indefectible.[1] The natural understanding of the comment would appear to be that St. Peter was to suffer a martyr's death. But the additional item of interpretation that it refers to death by crucifixion is by no means clearly contained in the

[1] I need not deal here with the fancy of those who take the interpretative statement to be a mere gloss of much later origin.

evangelist's words. The picture presented is merely that of a man who in the prime of life has been able to rise from his chair or bed and array himself for the street without assistance; but the time is to come many years later when in the decrepitude of old age he shall be summoned to death; then he will be so weak as to be no longer able even to rise by unaided effort; he must then perforce stretch forth his hands for help, and submit himself to the rude attendance of him who shall lift him to his feet, and dress him, and conduct him to the place appointed for his execution. To those who in spite of this natural interpretation of the scene discern in the stretching forth of the old man's hands a sure allusion to the attitude of a victim on the cross, it is sufficient to remark that the stretching forth of hands precedes the arraying and conveyance to the fatal spot, and does not follow them. It is by no means " difficult to see what other explanation can be given " than that of specific reference to crucifixion. It is instead difficult to see how any man not under the sway of the unanimity of much later repetitive interpretation could believe in the existence here of any such specific reference.

The interpretation of the gospel words as having this specific reference was first suggested after the belief was established that St. Peter died by crucifixion, and at Rome. It can be traced no farther back than to Tertullian.[1] The vague utterance of Clement [2] had apparently already been interpreted to mean that Sts. Peter and Paul were put to death in Rome. Hegesippus may well have been the originator of this elucidation. Tertullian certainly adopted it. As a trained Roman lawyer he would know that St. Paul, a Roman citizen, if condemned to death, would in accordance with ordinary procedure be beheaded, while St. Peter under similar circumstances would

[1] Tert. *Scorp.* 15 (quoted on p. 122, n.1); *Praescr. Her.* 36.
[2] i. Clem. 5.

be crucified. So he recorded it, and later writers followed suit.[1]

"The crucifixion of S. Peter is always connected by tradition with Rome, and with no other place." Here is only another phase of the same historical fallacy that has just been mentioned, complicated with that of belief in the actual existence of oral historical tradition at that day. For by "tradition" the author apparently means oral as well as written report.[2] Yet beliefs are often not due to anything else than descent along a literary line of successive repetitions. The original interpretation has its source in an easy guess; it is in itself perfectly innocent and to all appearance unobjectionable; no claim of ecclesiastical pre-eminence, for example, is in any way whatever based upon it; it contradicts no already propounded belief; it is published to a people that knows nothing of the need or nature of criticism of sources, or of the inter-relations of sources, a people very cautious and jealous about new doctrines, but welcoming unquestioningly new historical statements and inferences, if only they are comely and fitting. The non-existence of any competitive assertion, and the consecutive repetition of the given assertion, are no evidence whatsoever that the nucleus of the whole was not an invention, guess, or unwarrantable inference. Must every assertion made in an uncritical age be now accepted as true because no one at that time was able to pronounce it false, or cared to investigate it?

"It would be arbitrary to separate the locality from the manner of martyrdom." Why so? Is it inconceivable that the fact of an apostle's death might be asserted, or even sufficiently attested, and yet the locality have dropped out of the "tradition"? or is

[1] Origen's additional item about the cross being planted head downward will be mentioned in a later chapter (p. 317).

[2] This ambiguity of the word "tradition" is frequently found convenient by writers; for if the weakness of written record on a certain point be manifest, the supporting strength of oral transmission may be tacitly assumed.

it not possible also that an unassigned fact might come by mere inference to have a locality falsely attributed to it, and the attribution go long unchallenged because no one then saw any reason for examining it? Profane history certainly displays many false assignments of locality to indubitable events. It would be a miracle if sacred history were free from all such errors. And in general are fact and locality of historical occurrences so indissolubly bound together? Might not one be true and the other not? The assignment of a locality doubtless helps the perpetuation (and sometimes the elaboration) of a belief, but frequently has nothing to do with its real credibility. It may even be on occasion a suspicious circumstance. Are we bound to believe that the wolf suckled Romulus and Remus because we know the site of the Lupercal? Are we "arbitrary" in declining to put credence in the story that M. Curtius leaped his horse into an infernal abyss in the Roman Forum, while yet we may even now gaze upon the precise spot assigned to that marvel through many centuries of Republic and Empire? We believe St. John the Evangelist to be dead; but we may judge the late stories concerning the place of his death to be insufficient in the way of testimony; ought we therefore in strict reason to believe him to be still on this earth awaiting in mortal form the coming of his Lord? Neither can it be arbitrary to disconnect, if we choose, the fact from the manner, or either or both from the later asserted locality, of St. Peter's death. There is no such necessary connection between manner and locality as the author of the paragraph now under consideration appears to treat as axiomatic.

But his last sentence is perhaps the most surprising of all, because it does not appear to express merely a somewhat plaintive and regretful recognition of the necessary state of the case, but to embody a professed argument in favour of belief, on the ground that to deny belief would be to sink into the horror of con-

fessed and hopeless ignorance. "Unless we accept the Roman residence of S. Peter," he says, "we know nothing about his later years and death." That, considered as a mere statement, is perfectly true, even though 'tis pity: considered as an argument, and perhaps as a would-be conclusive and clinching argument (to the quality of which its collocation seems to indicate that it aspires), it is lamentably a thing of naught, and of worse than naught, because so subtly misleading. How could anything but a touch of "the ecclesiastical mind" have given rise to it? Is agnosticism about a matter of history properly such a thing of terror to seekers after historical truth?

In what has been said in this chapter, and in what will be said in the chapters that follow, there is not the slightest will on the part of the writer to bring a railing accusation against those whom he most humbly and gratefully acknowledges as his intellectual betters, and before whose learning he stands abashed. His is rather the attitude of the eager pupil who ventures in Seminar to argue for his own views in the presence of his indulgent instructors. If his manner in any point appears presumptuous, let them of their courtesy and charity attribute the defect to an infelicity in command of expression rather than to a habit of mind and heart.

CHAPTER II

THE ATTITUDE OF ANCIENT ROME TOWARD RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS CULTS

An understanding of the general attitude of the Roman state and community toward religion and religious cults is necessary to the understanding of the conditions that surrounded the planting of Christianity in the territory of the Empire. In the earlier stages of the Italian community there was as naturally community worship as there was community government. Neither rested on any philosophical theory about rights and duties. They were primitive institutions. And community worship, like community government, was a natural extension from that which existed in the family. There is, to be sure, no stage in social development in Italy that can be historically isolated and pointed to as exhibiting the family as the independent social unit, like, for example, the family of Abraham. As early as we can begin to see the Romans in actual life, they are living in a community composed of various families (or *gentes*), and the need of adaptation to the common welfare has already occasioned some modifications of the individualism of the family group. But it is certainly true that through the conditions then existing it is possible to discern that yet earlier stage when the family—that complex with the *pater familias* at the head, and under him, and belonging to him, his wife, sons, daughters-in-law, unmarried daughters, grandchildren

(in the male line) to the last degree yet born, slaves, and all the material possessions of all these persons—was an independent and natural unit complete in itself. The later community—the State—derived its nature and existence from the family, and not the family its from the State. The gods worshipped by the family in most intimate and vital fashion were family gods, peculiar to itself. Another family might have similar gods, but they were not the same gods, any more than the similar human beings of that neighbouring family were the same as those of any other. The "Lares and Penates" were a cherished possession of the family. It owned them rather than belonged to them, and these proprietary deities were regarded as bound to extend their care and protection over the family, if it in turn was careful to maintain the due traditional rites of propitiation toward them. Indeed, it is rather difficult to say just how far the relation of the obligated deities to the household was regarded as a positive one of care and protection, and just how far it was a negative one of refraining from the doing of injury. The gods were rather pixy-like. This fear of them as potential powers for ill instead of purely benevolent and beneficent influences deeply tinged Roman thought and feeling through the centuries that saw the development of the little riparian hamlet into the mighty seat of world-empire.

These intimate household deities, conveniently summed up under the familiar name of Lares and Penates, came to be almost synonymous with the Roman's hearth-fire and home. Whatever their ultimate origin, they were so closely connected with the home as to be treated rather as indoor than as outdoor gods. If they had been quite all the objects of the earliest Roman's somewhat fearful worship, it might not be very easy to see how, when families combined for mutual help and protection into a community growing by gradual stages into formal

organisation, they were to find the proper and necessary objects of community worship, unless by the process of arbitrary invention. These family gods certainly appear to be too closely attached to their respective groups to be readily detached therefrom and pooled in one common pantheon. But the Roman mind was not essentially mystical; it was instead almost always practical and reasonable, being thoroughly ingenious and ready in the adaptation of principle to the needs of actual life. Since the family has its Lares and Penates, and the community is a sort of larger family, there surely ought to be community Lares and Penates; accordingly we find an attempt to foster the worship of postulated community deities under these titles. But the attempt seems to have met with only tolerable success, partly no doubt because the Roman, for some mysterious reason, easily grasped the notion of the State as a commanding imperious organism, and pushed ahead in that direction, while he quickly lost sight of the more amiable and human concept of the State as in essence one large family. The worship of the community Lares and Penates is a very pale and ineffective thing in the field of Roman religion, in spite of apparently more than one attempt made by the civic authorities to quicken it into more vigorous life. Just how far this failure may have been due to a feeling among the populace that while the family Lares and Penates were real things, the community Lares and Penates were unreal abstractions, it is impossible to say.

But the community was not left without really active and efficient cults by this collapse of its Lares and Penates. The source for the more natural and therefore more active notion of proper objects of community worship may be found, indeed, in the period of the primaeval family unit. The Lares and Penates were, to be sure, limited and strictly circumscribed and guarded family possessions. But this early Roman, or rather his distant progenitor—since

these Indo-Europeans had doubtless developed some form of community life long before they finally settled down in Italy—was busied with the tillage of the soil and the care of flocks and herds. He might have an exclusive title to his Lares and Penates, who dwelt in his house and ate of his food, but these heavenly and earthly Powers that sent blight upon his crops and blains upon his cattle, that parched and soaked and burned and froze him and his possessions, were very evidently the same that treated his neighbour in similar fashion. Here was the starting-point of propitiatory worship by different units of no longer merely similar but of identically the same divinities. This was easily transferred to the incipient community life, and developed with its development. Nor is it necessary for the purposes of this brief sketch to explain the reasons for the flourishing state of that deity of the domestic hearth-fire, Vesta, alongside the feeble and anaemic condition of her apparent cognates, the community Lares and Penates, with their colleagues, Ianus, Terminus, and the like.

But in one way the exclusiveness of the old family deities was carried over into the realm of the community gods. Jupiter, Juno, and the rest were indeed worshipped by Romans of whatever family, but they were the property of Rome, and of no other city. A Juno might, to be sure, be worshipped at Veii or at Lanuuium, but she was very evidently not the same Juno as that of Rome, precisely as in the sentiment of the uninstructed devotee of to-day the Blessed Virgin of Loreto is not identical with her of Lourdes or of Araceli. Furthermore, these other local deities might be captured, or bought up, if one knew the proper forms of bribe or invocation for the purpose, and thus be transferred with all their powers of influence from the weaker city to the stronger.[1] Presumably,

[1] The process of *euocatio*: cf. Liu. v. 21; Macr. iii. 9; Plin. *N.H.* xxviii. 18; Seru. *Ad Aen.* ii. 244, 351.

on the other hand, some other community might thus deprive Rome of her native gods, and there are some faint traces of such apprehension among the Romans in the early days. But with the growing size, power, and wealth of Rome, we see no further indications of jealousy on this score. Doubtless a deity who would be willing to exchange a comfortable situation at Rome for any that a foreign city could offer would be a very poor and despicable creature.

With the spread of the realm over the world, the community worship of the Roman became a national and oecumenical worship, and much of it might be carried on wherever Romans were settled. Of course there was much formalism and syncretism in the system. Besides the tendency to formalism that besets even an active faith, and may corrupt it into a sensuous indulgence, there was at work the formalism that flourishes in the atmosphere of imperial expansion and great material prosperity, that formalism of indifference, which in its extreme aspect is practical atheism or agnosticism. And there was also the spread of a philosophical scepticism that perforce had abandoned all acceptance of the antique formularies of belief and worship, and had found no vital faith to take its place, but at best only a system of moral living. For most of the studious class infected by this form of doubt the practical outcome was apparently like that of the class just mentioned, in an attitude of tolerant or contemptuous indifference to religious matters and questions. The syncretistic tendency began as early as the influence of Greek ideas on Roman thought and fashion, and the consequent identification as far as possible of the Italian with the Greek divinities. Its spread with the extension of the Roman dominions eastward was naturally due on the one hand to the decay of the old pride of exclusiveness in the face of the cosmopolitan life of the day, and on the other to the Roman practical talent for administration, and

for making the necessary adaptations of principle to accompany it. The Roman concept of religion had never been that of an inly recognised bond of exclusive obligatory moral loyalty to an unseen and highly spiritual Being. It made the relation between man and the gods entirely objective and unmystical. But it had recognised decent regard for the formulas of the community religion as a political duty of all good citizens.

It is very essential for the modern reader to grasp this fact, which is so incongruous with the usual concepts of religiously minded people of the present era. It is hardly useful to compare the Roman system of religion to an established Church of to-day. In the first place, the purely Roman system had no body of priests corresponding to the Aaronic priesthood among the Hebrews, or to the orders of clergy in the Christian Church. Its religious officials were merely political functionaries of State like any other. They might, and often did, fill other offices as well as those of religion. The *pontifex maximus* himself, recognised head of the religious system of Rome, was no more a cleric than was, for example, the Procurator of the Holy Synod in Russia, or is King George V. in his official relation to the Church of England. The especial priest (as for convenience he may pardonably be called) of the great Jupiter himself, the *flamen Dialis*, though his person was hedged about by a number of venerable and quaint tabus, and he comes as near being a priest as any Roman official, was himself nevertheless in historical times only a citizen-official like any other.

In the second place, the Roman religion made no demand upon or appeal to any personal or emotional faith on the part of its adherents. It did not aim to inculcate a body of spiritual beliefs or even of external morality. Not that the old Roman character was by any means marked by the absence of sturdy moral

virtues—far otherwise—but, since the gods were not looked upon as by nature and necessity the supreme embodiment and exemplars of a perfect morality, the binding appeal of these virtues was not primarily based upon any divine sanction. The ascription of moral obligation in social relations to an ultimate supernatural source of enlightenment and command, as it shows, for example, in the Mosaic decalogue, was a later and somewhat sporadic philosophic development in Roman thought, and seems to have had no marked and widespread effect on Roman character. In this respect Christianity brought into popular life a new revelation of God to man, as it brought in also a new doctrine of the brotherhood of all human beings. Even the Stoic ethics had hardly gone farther than to teach the essential equality of all men. It may be, however, that from early days, apart from the teaching of systematic philosophy, there had existed alongside the materialistic and formal beliefs of the majority a more spiritual, though less articulate, conviction of the character of the divine creative force, and of its relation to the human creature. God had perhaps in this sense never "left Himself without a witness." [1]

But the Roman system was quite indifferent to the personal convictions of its subjects or even of its officials. Julius Caesar, for example, filled the office of *pontifex maximus*, as did the emperors who succeeded to the throne that he practically founded; but Julius Caesar was apparently no believer in the gods.[2] The Roman religion was simply a part of the political system of the State, and a nominal acceptance of it was expected of all citizens and subjects of the State,

[1] Acts xiv. 17.

[2] Perhaps Caesar himself would have repudiated a charge of atheism, and claimed that he was sceptical merely about the superstitions of popular belief, like Cicero and other scholars of his time. But he was *pontifex maximus*, and they were not; and he certainly appears to have asserted publicly his belief that "death ends all" (cf. Sall. *Cat.* 51. 20); and he disregarded auspices and omens from his early life to his last day, though he sometimes chronicled them, and Pliny says he used a charm (*N.H.* xxviii. 21).

precisely as they were expected to accept obediently its political rule. Yet as an ordinary citizen nowadays may live quite comfortably and unsuspiciously without taking any active interest in politics, so a resident of the Roman realm might live under ordinary circumstances without having any especial concern about its official religion. He would not be called upon to make any profession of personal faith, nor to prove his adherence by any attendance at religious functions, just as we are not often called upon to take or to renew the oath of civic allegiance, nor to prove our loyalty by any other test. The Roman religion was certainly not an exigent religion. Its yoke was so easy as to be practically imponderable. And it was singularly tolerant. A man might never show his face within the portals of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, but might be an enthusiastic devotee of Isis, or of some other foreign cult, and no one would dream, under ordinary circumstances, of interfering with him. The gods of the Romans were not jealous gods. They were too serenely secure in their own position sensitively to resent intrusion on their domain. Indeed, as early as when Hannibal was yet encamped in Italy, the Roman state, to help win the war, had officially invited and welcomed the utterly un-Italian Magna Mater of Pessinus to an honoured seat in Rome.[1] When she was followed by a miscellaneous swarm of uninvited guests, chiefly strange cults from Egypt and the East, there was occasionally some demur on grounds of formal theory and precedent against admitting these within the ritual city-limits ; but before the preaching of Christianity began, all such scruples had at any rate lost ethical significance, and the cults that dwelt at Rome in amicable relations with her official religion were, or speedily became, as variegated in source and character as her increasing polyglot population. To be sure, there were a few occasions when the

[1] Cf. Liu. xxix. 10, 11, 14 ; *et al.*

Government laid a heavy hand upon an imported cult, prohibited its exercise in Rome, and even put to death or banished its adherents; but these were rare instances, and in no case were due to anything that can properly be called religious animosity. In every case the religion was, or was believed to have been, made a cloak for definite offences against moral law or social order.[1] And it is observable that in every instance the repressive ban was after a time tacitly or formally lifted.

Yet it should be noted that none of these imported cults (except those of the Greek deities, who were early identified with the corresponding gods of Italy, and that of the Magna Mater, which was an official adoption) stood on the same basis as the native official religion. It was a part of the State system, and its administration a part of the administration of the State. The citizens and subjects of Rome were all naturally regarded in a technical sense as adherents of its religion as much as of the rest of its political system. If one of them had openly protested, and avowed that he acknowledged allegiance to some other throne than Caesar's, he would of course have been summarily dealt with on the charge of treason. But the Roman mind was quite incapable of conceiving that any purely religious cult could reasonably exist that demanded exclusive spiritual loyalty to itself alone from its devotees. Hence Roman law and custom regarded the adherents of all these other religions as special groups of citizens or subjects organised into voluntary associations or clubs for their own purposes, not inconsistent with their proper civic loyalty. To cite a modern though not very precise

[1] An interesting parallel in the political field was furnished in 1918, when the Government of Canada by Order-in-Council proscribed for the period of the war certain associations that presumably had been earlier tolerated, and made even continued membership in them an offence punishable by heavy penalty. These associations were believed to be promoters of hostility to the war-measures of the Government.

parallel, they were, from the official Roman standpoint, like special religious confraternities in the Christian Church of to-day. Such voluntary associations were therefore usually permitted. The legal distinction between *licita* and *illicita* applied to these organisations will be discussed in a succeeding chapter.[1]

Patriotism, however noble, is at its basis a partisan sentiment. For its active development in a given nation there must be presented to the contemplation of the citizens a rival or an enemy power. The palmy days of Roman patriotism were those when Rome was surrounded by vigorous and dangerous foes. By the beginning of the Christian era Rome had remaining on her widely flung frontier no such rival powers. Everywhere was the *pax Romana*. Only in the distant marshes of Germany, or on the plains swept by the Parthian cavalry, were there lurking any forces that could cause her a moment's disquietude. In this state of calm the sturdy virtue of patriotism tended to become flaccid. Moreover, loyalty as a quickening force needs some concrete object about which to crystallise, as a thread will serve to start the formation of sugar-crystals out of the saturated solution. This matrix of emotional loyalty is often the person of a ruling monarch. But republican Rome had no ruling monarch. Yet she had the custom of deifying for the purpose of formal sentiment certain abstract moral qualities or immaterial powers of good or evil. Why not, then, go a step farther and unify the loyal sentiment of citizens about a deified concept of Rome herself, a Dea Roma?[2] It was done.

But, after all, the Dea Roma was an abstract and artificial conception. Precisely as the cult of the other deified abstractions honoured at Rome played no prominent part in the religious system of the capital, so the worship of Dea Roma was, apparently from its

[1] Pp. 52 ff.

[2] The occasional cult in the East of a local Τύχη may have suggested this.

inception, a very shadowy thing, lacking of necessity in the picturesque and imaginative vividness that still marked the notion of the old gods. The founding of the Empire (or, to speak more accurately, of the Principate) brought an almost immediate change. The person of the Prince (or, as he is popularly called in recent and even in ancient times, the Emperor) provided that concrete object about which loyalty could crystallise and grow. The need of this was naturally felt more keenly in the provinces than at Rome. In the capital itself the glory of the city and the majesty of the monarch were present before the eyes of the populace every day. The pioneer Roman citizens in the outlying parts of the Empire —more distant on account of the difficulty and slowness of ancient means of communication—had no such constant stimulus and satisfaction for their emotional patriotism. Just as Americans or Britons among distant and strange peoples often feel and exhibit a fervour of emotional loyalty that did not openly characterise them in their respective home-countries, so these Romans in the provinces quickly grasped the notion of exalting the person of their living Prince to quasi-divine honours. It was not an entirely new idea, that a man was to be thus revered. Some philosophers had taught that all gods, even the Olympian deities, were but great men and benefactors of their race raised to immortality and continued power by their virtues, and through the legendary tributes of succeeding ages. At Rome itself the cult of Quirinus, who had come to be identified with Romulus, the reputed founder of the city, had endured throughout the Republican era, and had lost apparently none of its popularity. The victorious Roman general at the proud moment of his triumph appeared before the eyes of his acclaiming fellow-citizens habited and charioted like the great Jupiter himself. Granted that this and the other cognate phenomena were not

Italian in origin, but were importations into the Roman system due to Greek or Etruscan influence, they had nevertheless become thoroughly acclimated in the Roman mental atmosphere. In the most recent years Julius Caesar had been officially raised after his death to a place in the Roman pantheon. He, the descendant of Venus, had thus followed in the footsteps of the mighty Hercules, and his magnificent temple at the eastern end of the Roman Forum stood close by that of those other man-gods, Castor and Pollux, and looked up in no guise of humility to the shrines of ancient Saturn and of the Capitoline Triad. It was of course a step farther thus to honour a yet living monarch ; but though it was without precedent at Rome, there was sufficient precedent for it in the semi-divine character ascribed to monarchs and other great men in Egypt and the East ; and very possibly the fervid patriots who in the provinces first asked Augustus to permit an altar to be raised to him, found an example and a prompting in the customs and history of the local cults of the people among whom they dwelt.

Augustus was not greedy of unctuous flattery, but he was too shrewd and far-seeing a statesman to decline unconditionally the proffered honour. He understood perfectly the unwieldy character of that widely extended and heterogeneous realm over which he presided. His conviction of the difficulties attending its proper administration is attested by the counsel he left to his successors not to extend farther its already too vast borders.[1] Compactness was clearly impossible. Loyal unity was to be fostered by every available means, that the immense empire might be welded together into a sentimental as well as a political oneness. The Roman mind, even so prudent and statesmanlike a one as that of Augustus, had not arrived at the concept of a single great dominion

[1] Cf. Tac. *Ann.* i. 11. 7 ; Dio C. lvi. 33. 3.

with its distant divisions enjoying complete local self-government in domestic matters. That idea, indeed, does not seem to have dawned upon the world till after the American Revolution had torn from Great Britain her most promising colonies. The empire of Rome had grown by gradual accretions made to the territory of a single city-state. Her whole ideal was one of political consolidation centred about a governing power at Rome. Her problem was to tighten the cords that bound her realm to this one centre of unity. The political bond was perhaps already sufficiently strong in essence. It needed only in the moral sphere of patriotism the reinforcement of a sentimental attachment.

Augustus therefore granted the petition of his loyal subjects, but appears to have specified his preference that at any rate Roman citizens in the provinces should join the cult of Dea Roma with that of himself.[1] The response was most gratifying. The worship of Augustus, or of Rome and Augustus, spread rapidly through all the fringe of provinces from Asia Minor to Spain, though it attained no such popularity in Italy (save among alien residents in the commercial coast cities), for which home-land, indeed, it was not intended or planned. In succeeding reigns the Augustus of "Rome and Augustus" meant always the living Prince of the day. For the first Augustus —*diuus Augustus*, *diui* [*Iuli*] *filius*—there was established after his death a special cult, as had been the case with the divine Julius himself.

Doubtless to the better-instructed, whether Roman or provincial, the worship of the reigning Augustus was not so much a reverence of the living man himself as of his *genius*. From this point of view it fitted in well enough with Roman precedent. Every man was regarded as having his *genius*, every woman her corresponding *Iuno*. This *genius* is a concept difficult

[1] Cf. Dio C. li. 20; Tac. *Ann.* iv. 37; Suet. *Aug.* 52.

for a modern to define or to understand. Probably the Romans themselves were hazy about it. It was certainly not the soul of the man himself, but it was closely akin to his spirit (if we may analyse him in scholastic fashion into body, soul, and spirit), as being a pure vital essence and a counterpart of the man himself, born with him and accompanying him through life thereafter—a sort of cross between an astral double and a guardian angel of limited existence. The members of a family might make offerings on appropriate occasions (especially on his birthday) to the *genius* of their *pater familias*. A man might even "placate his own *genius*," or that of a friend, in similar fashion. It was therefore no illogical thing to do reverence to the *genius* of the emperor, as *pater patriae*.

The only sect in the Roman realm to which, we are safe in saying, this cult was a decidedly abhorrent thing was that of the Jews. Their Jehovah was a national Hebrew divinity. They had not arrived at a clear concept of him as the God of all mankind. They apparently did not at this period unanimously feel bound to extend his worship to the utmost of their power among other races. They had indeed come to admit men of other races as proselytes, and in a looser bond of attachment other persons yet ("devout men," "God-fearers"),[1] who, not being of Hebrew lineage, were not held subject to all the precepts of the Mosaic code. But farther than this they did not all agree in feeling it their bounden duty to go.[2] Their national Jehovah was, however, the One and Only God. He demanded of Hebrews, as of their voluntary

[1] Cf., *e.g.*, Acts ii. 5; x. 2; technically called "Proselytes of the Gate."

[2] This statement is in disagreement with the view usually taken by both Jewish and Christian modern writers, who look upon the Jews (at least of antiquity) as at all times and in all places a most ardent and vigorous proselyting sect. The evidence in support of this conception appears to the present writer manifestly strained, though the discussion of it would take too much space here. The history of the Jews in their attitude toward proselyting is in its successive phases singularly like that of the Mohammedans. Contrast them also with the Christians of equal period; and note that in the records of the virulent animosity of the Jews against the Christians no indication emerges that it arose from or was sharpened by a rivalry in proselyting.

and complete adherents from other nationalities, an absolutely exclusive loyalty and devotion. The worship of any other god by his people was idolatry, and idolatry was the worst of sins. The first two of the Mosaic commandments expressed his injunction on this point with irrevocable decision. Evidently no orthodox Jew could join in emperor-worship, even when it was professedly regarded as a test of civic loyalty and not as resting on any theological beliefs. Apparently no other Roman citizens or subjects were in such case. No other deity than Jehovah claimed the exclusive loyalty of his devotees. The worshipper of Isis or of Mithra, the sceptical disciple of the Garden or the Porch, might disregard the official cults of Rome, and even disbelieve in the gods concerned, but he would have no conscientious scruples such as would lead him violently to reject or abhor them. He would certainly not refuse, as the true Hebrew must, to join in the rites of the national Roman religion, if such public profession of conformity was demanded by competent judicial authority.

It is certainly an interesting question how the Jew managed to get along peaceably under Roman sway with these intolerant inhibitions from his own side governing him. Jews were living in large numbers in every part of the Roman dominions. These were in the main Jews of the Dispersion, the Diaspora, many of whom were centuries removed from any residence in Palestine. The Diaspora dates back to so early a period that all trace of its beginning has vanished. Its origin may have been in the "lost ten tribes of Israel." Alexander and his generals, as well as later military conquerors, doubtless contributed greatly to it. The lure of trade had enlarged it. How many of these dispersed Jews had abandoned their nationality and been absorbed into the main body of the communities in which they dwelt, it is impossible to estimate. But very many retained their faith, kept

the customs that Moses commanded, looked to Palestine as their ancestral and spiritual home, and "went up to Jerusalem to the Feast" as often as they could; even though they no longer spoke Aramaic, but the local dialects of Greek, and read their Bible, not in the original Hebrew, but in the Septuagint version, if they could read it at all. Many of these Hellenistic Jews had gained Roman citizenship in one way or another.

Up to the time of Pompey's invasion of Palestine the Jewish realm in that land was in the eye of Rome a foreign state, whose citizens might be tolerated as residents in any part of the Roman dominions, if there was no particular reason at any given time for excluding them. Rome had never been especially sensitive about the presence of *peregrini*, as such, within her borders. The Jews had a national religion, and, however absurd and debasing it might be, they might of course celebrate its rites freely in Rome or elsewhere in Roman territory, as was the generous permission usually accorded to foreign cults that did not make themselves particularly obnoxious. With Pompey's conquest of Palestine (in 63–62 B.C.) and readjustment of its government, Judaea still retained a political existence of its own, though as a state subject to Roman suzerainty. No necessary difference was made thereby in the relation to the Roman authority of Jews resident outside of Palestine. They did not suffer any diminution of rights and privileges. Indeed, they came, or had come, to have some special and perhaps unique privileges accorded them. Their religion, since it was a recognised established religion in an autonomous state, was of course *licita*.[1] As a special corollary to this, the Jewish government at home being a theocratic government administered by the Sanhedrim, not

[1] Cf. Tert. *Apol.* 21 *insignissimae religionis* [sc. *Iudaeorum*], *certe licitae*. Perhaps in strictness the epithet ought to be regarded as applicable to the Jewish associations for worship only after the abolition of the Jewish state in A.D. 70 had cancelled their former privilege of the free exercise of their religion in Roman territory as that of an allied state.

merely was its synagogue worship permitted elsewhere in the Roman dominions, but even some local organisation that would strictly be called political and governmental was conceded to Jewish colonies in Roman cities. And especially the Jews, having alleged curious religious scruples about working or fighting on the Sabbath day, had even, at least on some occasions and in some places, been granted exemption from the liability to conscription for service in the Roman army. These and other privileges were extended to all Jews of the Diaspora, and not merely to those who had emigrated from Palestine within recent times. In all strictness it would appear that Jews who were Roman citizens by special grant or by descent, or who, being Roman freedmen or descendants of freedmen, had received or inherited the lesser rights of "Latin citizenship," had lost all rights of citizenship in another state, and accordingly would not be entitled to share in these special privileges. But the Romans, it seems, did not think it worth while to inquire too curiously into the questions of precise political status, and made the adherence to the Jewish national religion the sole determining test of claim to such grants of privilege, at least in the case of Jews by blood. About proselytes from other nationalities we are not safe in making the same assertion, in view of the condemnation of certain persons by Domitian on the formal charge of "adopting Jewish practices." [1]

There was perhaps the less reason for distinguishing Roman and Latin citizens in this respect from *peregrini*, in that the special privileges were not of such a character as likely to interfere seriously by exemption with the obligations resting upon such citizens.[2]

[1] The matter of the legal status and treatment of Roman citizens who became Jewish proselytes is well, though not exhaustively, treated by Mommsen in the article mentioned below (p. 45, n. 1).

[2] But for the discussion of an interesting case that arose in the early Empire, see an article by the present writer on "The Expulsion of Jews from Rome under Tiberius," in *Classical Philology*, xiv. pp. 365-72.

All the Jews of the Dispersion were, then, usually treated without discrimination as if they were subjects of the Jewish state. But the Jewish state was politically blotted out in A.D. 70 under Vespasian. A new condition would seem thereby to have been created.[1] Yet outside of Palestine itself this was true for the most part in theory only. The Jews of the Dispersion, far outnumbering their Palestinian brethren, and even many of the latter also, had not supported the revolt against Rome, and therefore were not justly deserving of any punishment, but rather of consideration. Moreover, the Roman mind was usually more regardful of immediate precedent than of historical origins and questions of theory. Hence the old Jewish privileges were continued just as they had been throughout the Empire, save that the Jews now paid into the Roman *fiscus* for the benefit of Jupiter Capitolinus the annual tax they had formerly sent to the Temple at Jerusalem.[2] Even the Roman jurists went on speaking of them as a nation, a people, a race, precisely as when they still formed a distinct political entity. This was natural enough, since the Jewish colonies throughout the Roman dominions exhibited the same visible organisation that they had before enjoyed.

The legal condition of the Jews, then, was distinctly favourable. And their religion exerted at Rome some attraction, especially for curious women, who have traditionally been more susceptible than men to the fascinations of strange cults, and were particularly so in the Rome of the first century after

[1] The incident at Antioch recorded by Josephus (*B.I.* vii. 3. 3) can hardly have been, as Mommsen took it ("Der Religionsfrevel nach römischem Recht," reprinted in his *Gesam. Schriften*, iii. p. 406, n. 1), an indication that the former privileges of the Jews were regarded there as annulled. It was nothing but a lynching. The populace was excited against the Jews by false charge of a conspiracy among them to burn the city. In order to determine who were truly Jews, they applied the worship-test (cf. Pliny's action in Bithynia, discussed on p. 190). The Jews who refused to sacrifice to the gods were put to death, not for their religion, but on the ground of their alleged conspiracy to commit arson (cf. the case of the Christians at Rome under Nero, pp. 126 ff.).

[2] Cf. Joseph. *B.I.* vii. 6. 6 (218); Dio C. lxvi. 7. 2; Tert. *Apol.* 18 *uectigalis libertas* [sc. *Iudaeorum*].

Christ. It does not appear probable that the Jews made a very great number of proselytes in Rome, though some striking instances are mentioned. But they did attract attention. The popular feeling about this propaganda, so far as it went, may be summed up by saying that it was sometimes one of disgust or indignation, sometimes one of good-humoured contempt. The Jews of Palestine had been regarded by their Roman overlords as a troublesome people to manage, incomprehensible, stubborn, given to senseless superstitions, and always quarrelling among themselves. At Rome the interest felt by a few dilettanti in their religion did not make them objects of popular regard. How far the personal, as distinct from political and religious, characteristics of the Jews contributed to rendering them distasteful to the Romans among whom they dwelt can hardly be determined, any more than it can be accurately estimated in considering their social condition in various countries during recent centuries. But generally distasteful they certainly appear to have been. Among other uncomplimentary opinions expressed of them by pagan writers (and also by Christians) they are declared to be atheists, haters of religion, foes of mankind, superstitious, seditious, disrespectful toward the emperor, abandoned by the gods, stiff-necked, servile, sensual, cruel, vicious, rascally, given to ritual murders, utterly depraved in every way, and dangerous.[1] No doubt the voluntary social isolation and cliquiness of the Jews made them objects of dislike to the populace, with the lower orders of which they generally ranked ; for none are more given than the common people to resenting the action of neighbours who "keep to themselves." In the popular Roman mind the aspect of such privacy tended to breed suspicion of immoral practices. This popular

[1] Cf. the longer list of charges given with citations by Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'empire romain*, ii. 45, n. 1.

disapprobation and suspicion was of course readily transferred to the Christians, who were naturally regarded at first as merely a sect of the Jews, from whom they sprang, and among whom they were chiefly recruited in the earlier years of their existence. In the face of these evident facts, the additional one that the orthodox Jew vehemently assailed the Christian as a heretic and apostate seemed of course to the Roman, of whatever class in society, an unimportant consideration. It was evidently, as Gallio and Festus took it to be,[1] a quarrel among themselves about matters of their own religion, such as had sprung up at various times in Jewry around various schismatic leaders. The Christians of course shared at first in the special political toleration accorded the Jews. But when the protests of both Jew and Christian had succeeded (probably about the time of Nero) in convincing the intelligent Roman that Christians, whatever their religious origin, were not properly of the Jewish faith, the new sectaries doubtless were judged to be not entitled to the privileged position of the Jews. This position had been of course recognised on the theory that they were subjects of another friendly state, free from any possible imposition of a test of conformity to the Roman official religion. This privilege they continued to enjoy even after the events of A.D. 70. But the Christians, now clearly distinguished from the Jews, lost that protection. They had fallen into the general class of Roman citizens and subjects, and were theoretically held to all the duties of people of that status. But they could not conscientiously share in the state-worship ; the emperor-cult was to them peculiarly blasphemous ; over them accordingly hung threatening possibilities. But the Romans were in general easy-going, and no especial circumstances prompted action on their part. Even the local Neronian " persecution " occasioned no widespread

[1] Cf. Acts xviii. 15 ; xxv. 19.

movement in the direction of attempted repression of Christianity.[1] Not before the middle or later part of the second century (with the possible exception of a few months late in the reign of Domitian,[2] when, however, action was not directed specifically against Christianity) did the Roman authorities commonly apply the test of conformity, the refusal of which substantiated the guilt of treason. Even in the second decade of that century, in the case of the "persecution" of Christians in Bithynia, the test was applied merely to determine whether the accused actually were members of a *collegium* prohibited at that time in that province, along with other *collegia*, by specific decree.[3] The alleged crime was not concerned with the religious question intrinsically. And it may not be out of place to remark that when the Roman officials here and there did, in the latter part of the second century, interpret the refusal to share in emperor-worship as involving the guilt of *lèse-majesté*, since it indicated a hostile attitude toward the Government, Italy and Rome appear not to have suffered particularly from such prosecutions. It was not in the quiet and safe centre of the empire, but in its more turbulent outskirts, that especial anxiety existed about the weakening of the bond of unity through treasonable associations and teaching.

[1] See Chapter IV. p. 113. [2] See Chapter VI. p. 155.
[3] See Chapter VII. p. 190.

CHAPTER III

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE PERSECUTIONS

Several of the later chapters of this book are devoted to the discussion of that most lamentable experience of the early Christian Church, which never seems to have been out of the minds of its members as an actuality or an ever-threatening possibility, the Persecutions. Considerations peculiar to certain individual episodes of this character will be treated in their proper chapters. But it will be convenient to set down here certain matters that in some measure concern all alike.

Jesus Christ had repeatedly and most earnestly warned his disciples that the era which immediately confronted the Church would be one of conflict. Those who confessed his name would be subject to persecution even unto death. They were to find happiness in the midst of their sufferings, and to look forward to surpassing rewards for them in the life that should be theirs in the heavens. The prophecy of the Master about the course of their history in this world was amply fulfilled. It is quite natural that the one feature of their corporate life which most strongly impressed itself upon the minds of those early generations of Christians was that of frequently recurring persecutions. It was to the sufferers the outstanding fact above all others. From about the middle of the second century, when we find the first traces of an incipient curiosity about the history of the

several Churches, a note of the emperors under whom the Church suffered persecution is a primary item of the yet desultory Christian record. By the time when the Peace of the Church under Constantine had given opportunity and occasion for the quickening of interest in the history of its past, a canon of imperial persecutors had been fairly established. In its fullest form it may be conveniently read in the pages of Orosius,[1] which served Christian writers of the Middle Ages as their chief manual of ancient history.

According to Orosius there were ten imperial persecutors of the Church. In chronological order they were: Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, Septimius Severus, Maximin, Decius, Valerian, Aurelian, and last of all Diocletian and Maximian conjointly. The ten persecutions themselves Orosius fantastically compares, each to each in numerical order, to the ten plagues of Egypt.[2] It must of course be understood that the general acceptance among Christian writers of this list of the persecutors does not imply a belief that there were no sporadic cases of Christians put to death at intervening times on account of their faith. It means only that no other emperors took active and systematic legal measures against Christians, but that these were reported to have done so.

Doubtless at intervening times within the first two centuries, to which alone the present discussion is limited, there was more or less sporadic suffering of Christians. There was some in Italy, in Greece, in Africa, but there was probably more in Asia Minor, where Christianity was at this period more widespread, the cult of imperialism most vigorously active, and mob-passion most easily aroused, as may be seen from some of St. Paul's experiences. Much of this sporadic suffering may be ascribed to the informal harrying of neighbourly enmity. But this popular ill-will may

[1] Cf. Oros. vii. 7. 10 sqq.

[2] Cf. Oros. vii. 27.

well have issued in charges that brought Christians before the courts on trumped-up accusations. These probably were not always of offences that may be classified as against religion. They were perhaps not frequently so. But especially during the second half of the second century there are some indications that there was hostile official cognisance taken of Christianity by magistrates, particularly in the provinces, but also in Italy. It is not at all certain that such action was always upon information duly laid before the court by a responsible accuser, according to the generous terms of Trajan's rescript to Pliny [1] and of Hadrian's to Minicius Fundanus,[2] rather than upon the initiative of the magistrate himself, or upon mere denunciation. Just how much sporadic legal action must be assumed in order to account for the strenuous complaints of the Christian writers is doubtful. It is certainly not necessary, nor, in the lack of precise and detailed testimony, reasonable to conclude that cases were extremely frequent. Each individual instance was grievous enough to arouse the sympathy, fears, and indignant protest of the Christian community, and the general impression among the Churches would be framed in accordance therewith, especially as the several Churches appear, at least in the second century, to have cultivated correspondence with one another.

It has been occasionally remarked by modern writers (perhaps merely copying Gibbon) that according to Origen (*saec. III. med.*) there had been few Christian martyrs up to the time of his writing. But Origen's testimony will not bear this extreme interpretation put upon it. His argument in the passage concerned [3] is that all the enmity of the heathen against the Church has been in vain ; it has grown magnificently in spite of persecution ; God has always

[1] Cf. p. 196. [2] Cf. p. 202.
[3] Cf. Orig. *Contra Cels.* iii. 451 (Migne, *P.G.* xi. p. 930).

defended his people, and defeated the wicked purpose of those who would have destroyed it root and branch; those who have given up their lives for their religion are few in number, when compared with the entire company of Christians in the world. Accordingly this argument of Origen is of less statistical value than has occasionally been supposed; for probably no one at the present day or at any time would be inclined to think of a large proportion of the total number of Christians as swept away in the persecutions, whether organised or sporadic.

Even Tertullian, writing half a century earlier than Origen, triumphantly tells the provincial governors that, despite all their efforts at suppression, Christians have filled all the Roman world; if they should retire in a body to some distant corner of the earth, the rulers would have no one left to rule over; almost all the citizens of almost all the cities are Christians.[1] But of course this is mainly oratorical fireworks, after Tertullian's frequent style.

The traditional Roman view of societies formed among adherents of foreign cults in Roman territory has already been briefly mentioned.[2] Here it may be well to explain what was meant in Roman law and administration of the imperial period by the distinction between *licita* and *illicita* as applied to such organisations; for though these technical terms are frequently used by writers on the relations between the Roman state and Christianity, a decided misapprehension regarding the words seems to pervade some compositions. The right of voluntary association for some purpose of common interest not inconsistent with good citizenship was freely recognised

[1] *Apol.* 37 *hesterni sumus, et uestra omnia impleuimus, urbes, insulas, castella, municipia, conciliabula, castra ipsa, tribus, decurias, palatium, senatum, forum; sola uobis reliquimus templa . . . quaesissetis quibus imperaretis . . . nunc enim pauciores hostes habetis prae multitudine Christianorum, paene omnium ciuitatium paene omnes ciues Christianos habendo.*

[2] P. 36.

in the Roman realm.[1] Such organisations might be for business, social, charitable, or religious purposes. Various Latin or Greek names were used to designate them—*collegia*, *sodalitates*, *factiones*, *corpora*, ἑταιρίαι, θίασοι, and the like—and it is unnecessary for the present purpose to endeavour to discriminate between these terms.[2] If the associations were constituted for religious purposes, the official Roman cared practically nothing at all about the discorporate philosophical concepts or fancies underlying them, but he was often, on the other hand, much concerned about the *collegia* formed to advance these objects. This, however, was only in two particulars. The *collegium* must not under the pretext of its professed purpose shelter immoral or illegal practices, nor must it be a centre for political disaffection or revolt. If there was no ground for reasonable suspicion on either of these scores, the *collegium* might pursue its way in peace.

Some of these numerous *collegia* were *licita*, others (and probably the majority) were *illicita*; and if a *religio* is spoken of by one of these descriptive epithets, it is usually only because its adherents were legally regarded as forming a *collegium*. A *collegium licitum* differed from a *collegium illicitum* much as in the United States of America an incorporated society differs from one unincorporated. The *collegium licitum* could, for example, acquire property by gift, purchase, or inheritance; it could convey property to others; it could sue and be sued, implead and be impleaded; it was, in short, a juristic person. Too many modern writers have jumped to the conclusion that because

[1] Cf. Gaius on the Twelve Tables in *Dig.* xlvii. 22. 4 *dum ne quid ex publica lege corrumpant*; Marcianus, *ibid.* 1 *sed religionis causa coire non prohibentur, dum tamen per hoc non fiat contra senatus consultum quo illicita collegia arcentur.*

[2] Cf., however, Th. Mommsen, "Zur Lehre von den römischen Korporationen," in his *Gesammelte Schriften*, iii. 53 ff.; W. Liebenam, *Zur Geschichte und Organisation des römischen Vereinswesens*; and Kornemann's exhaustive article on "Collegia," with indications of literature, in the Pauly-Wissowa *Real-encyclopädie der klassischen altertumswissenschaft*, iv. 380-480. Mr. E. G. Hardy also has an interesting chapter on "Christianity in its Relation to *Collegia*" in his *Christianity and the Roman Government* (reprinted in his *Studies in Roman History*).

the *collegium licitum* was a "licensed" or "recognised" (we perhaps might better say an "incorporated") association, the *collegium illicitum* must have led at all times an "illicit" and furtive existence, in the face of the law, as a prohibited society. That would be a great exaggeration of the truth, if we are to take into consideration the ordinary run of Roman life rather than its extraordinary occasions. If the *collegium licitum* was a formally "authorised" association, the *collegium illicitum* was under normal circumstances at least one tolerated. It was not one driven to hiding in dens and caves of the earth. The *collegium illicitum* was an unincorporated society, differing from the *collegium licitum* in not possessing legally recognised rights, privileges, and responsibilities.[1] It evidently could on sufferance even hold property, though of course without any strictly legal title; for when the younger Pliny, as governor of the province of Pontus and Bithynia, examined under torture two women who were brought before him charged with being Christians, he tells Trajan he did so because they were reported to be slaves (*ministrae*, that is, διακόνισσαι, "deaconesses") of the Christian *collegium*, which he nevertheless must have clearly understood to be a *collegium illicitum*.[2] Such unincorporated societies (we do not know certainly about incorporated societies in the same case) might, to be sure, be at any time suppressed by legislative enactment, or (particularly in the provinces) by administrative authority of the proper Roman official, when he thought public order or security required it; but it is quite unjustifiable and absurd to suppose that in general they existed, if at all, in a constant state of legal outlawry, and that

[1] Cf. Paulus in *Dig.* xxxiv. 5. 20.

[2] Cf. Plin. *Ep.* x. 96. 8. It may be that Pliny understood, however, that the legal title of ownership in these *ministrae* was vested, not in the *collegium* which they actually served, and whose property they nominally were, but in some individual member or members of the society (see the passage from the *Digest* cited in the preceding note).

their members were exposed at every moment to the severe pains and penalties to which the members of actually proscribed associations were subject. Any ordinary reader of Roman history will remember a dozen instances when *collegia illicita* in a given locality were dissolved by formal and specific legal enactment of some sort, but perhaps a hundred could be cited of their apparently untroubled existence under ordinary circumstances. When Ulpian records [1] that an adherent of a *collegium illicitum* is liable to the penalty attaching to the crime of armed riot (that is, death), no well-informed student of Roman law and administration ought to understand more to be practically involved than that, when *collegia illicita* had been specifically ordered to disband, disobedient members were subject to the specified penalty. It was the ultimate penal weapon held in reserve, to be brought into active exercise only on occasions of extraordinary emergency.[2]

We are familiar with a concept of the proper function of legislation that puts laws upon the statute-book to remain in force until they are formally repealed. It is theoretically expected that they will continue to be consistently executed, though in practice they are not infrequently allowed to fall into abeyance. The Roman, both of the Republic and of the Empire, was intimately familiar with the concept of laws made for a temporary purpose, and tacitly permitted to be disregarded without any action like formal repeal, after the immediate occasion for their enforcement had passed. If a new need for the old law or edict arose, it was customary to issue it *de nouo*, with perhaps the modifications adapted to the later occasion. That

[1] *Dig.* xlvii. 22. 2.

[2] Yet one or two instances in Tertullian (whose late date must be remembered) might be interpreted as indicating that he uses the word *illicitum*, as applied to associations, in the sense of *prohibitum*. He speaks of the Christian organisation as *illicitum*, but he does not indicate that Christians were prosecuted on that account. The state of the case in his day needs further study, but the necessary material for it appears to be lacking.

was especially the case, of course, with legal action that was of an administrative or police character. In this class of enactments fell the regulations concerning *collegia*. If *collegia illicita* in some special locality and for some immediate reason were to be suppressed, it probably would appear to a Roman official quite unjust and irrational to effect this by no new enactment, but simply by putting into active operation without such warning some former decree to the same effect. There was no such concept of the permanence of an edict against *collegia illicita* as would make them, once forbidden, remain always forbidden, unless the prohibitory decree should be formally repealed. It is also perfectly certain that Christians would not be prosecuted for membership in a *collegium illicitum*, unless in case of such a temporary interdiction of all associations of that status. There are no valid indications in the first two centuries of an interdict directed against Christian associations alone. The prosecutions from which Christians suffered within that period are to be explained on other grounds.

It would seem to an ordinary classicist only reasonable to approach the question of the early attitude of the Roman state toward Christianity first of all from the standpoint of the Roman, and not, as the majority of critics appear to have done, from the standpoint of the Christian of possibly some two hundred years after Christ. We ought rationally to judge that whatever the rancorous feeling toward Christians exhibited by the populace here and there, the higher class of Romans, whether in the imperial capital or in provincial cities, in all probability might for a long time not even know of the existence of the Christian communities, and those who by favour of special opportunities had acquired some such knowledge would almost certainly not for the first century or so of their existence deem these associations a permanently threatening or an important element in the general

life of the State. It is by no means antecedently improbable that the State should not have adopted some general and official principle of action against Christians within a century from the time the sect arose ; it would rather be an inexplicable marvel if it had done so. We ought to expect to find only sporadic action of any kind, and no general legislation, ruling, precedent, or principle—not even any action at all unless here and there, where special circumstances prompted it, and then in such varying fashion as the differing occasions required or suggested, though always along the lines of ordinary, established forms and procedure. It is not venturesome to say that this is just what alone the unprejudiced student does find. Only from about the middle of the second century onward, though there was still no general or special legislation against Christianity, practical action against Christians, when it did occur, appears to tend toward a certain crystallisation, and a convenient and effective weapon in the hands of hostile magistrates was the charge of treason (*impietas*, *sacrilegium*, *maiestas*, *ἀσέβεια*, *ἀθεότης*), based upon the political offence of refusal to share in the State worship, of which the essentially regarded feature had come to be the cult of the reigning emperor, of course an especially abhorrent thing to an otherwise politically loyal Christian citizen. To the Christian, obsessed with the conscientious conviction of the supreme authority and importance of his religion in human life, and conscious of perfect moral rectitude in his conduct, the question between him and the State was purely a religious one. On the other hand, to the Roman, with his inherent incapacity to comprehend or even to recognise such a matter of imperious and exclusive conscience, the question was purely one of politics and administration. To the Christian his association, in its various branches, was the Church of God, apart from the civil state but in the ultimate issue superior

to it, working under Divine laws and sanctions. To this concept of an *imperium in imperio* the Roman statesman, when forced to confront it, could not for a moment assent. To the existence and propagation of what he would denominate the purely religious or philosophical concepts of the Christian *collegia* he was genially indifferent; to the political implications of these professed principles, when the issue with them was formally raised, he could not be otherwise than hostile. There can be no question of the irreconcilable antithesis between the Roman and the Christian theories. The Roman citizen or subject was bound, not by statute but by the immemorial common law, to at least a nominal conformity to the State religion as much as to its political system. This the Christian refused to recognise, and no plea (such as he and his apologists made) of purity of motive, or of virtuous conduct and unblemished loyalty in other respects, could be expected to avail before a Roman magistrate who sat to administer justice as the realm understood it. Doubtless there were in fact, however, many cases in which a mercifully inclined magistrate was so impressed with the moral character of the defendants brought before him, and with their innocence of any overt treasonable act, as to use some of the various means open to him to avoid their condemnation. But the more conscientious the magistrate, perhaps the less chance of escape was there for the Christian. Even the sweet-tempered and charitable Pliny ordered Christians to death, though he was finally so much impressed by the moral character of their association that he actually dared to suggest to Trajan in their behalf what practically amounted to a suspension or modification of his cherished edict against *collegia* in Bithynia. Probably in the greater discretion left to magistrates in the decades that followed, there were many unrecorded instances of escape by the mercy of the judge from the clutch of

the law. It is the cases of condemnation that naturally affected the Christian record and tradition. But if the nature of the Roman people had been less humane and generally reasonable and free from religious animosity (such animosity as marked Christians later in many dealings with heretics), the inexorable enforcement of the indubitable principle of required conformity might have swept Christianity from the face of the earth; for the penalty for non-conformity, in the ultimate issue, was death. The Christian of later days might well feel, as Origen did,[1] that the protecting hand of God must have been over His flock.

Within recent times Jews in Russia, negroes in America, have suffered from social animosity and from mob-violence. It is claimed also that they have not been justly treated before the courts. Both Jews and negroes commonly assert that they have been persecuted not for any crimes but for the name only—because they are Jews or negroes. This is doubtless in a sense true; yet it is not true that the law as applied in their cases considers it a crime merely to be a Jew or a negro, or that no other charge is necessary to bring them under the rod of the law. Even when the question is one only of mob-action, the incentive for it is found, not primarily in their race, colour, or religion, but in certain actual crimes that are, whether rightly or wrongly, believed to have been committed either by the immediate objects of the popular vengeance or by others of their class, for whom they are treated as corporately responsible, and in whose guilt they are thus rudely held to share.

The early Christians had a somewhat similar experience, and raised against it a somewhat similar protest. With their inner sense of the supreme sanctions of their religion, and conscious of their own moral rectitude, they summed up the enmity against them by affirming that they were made to suffer not

[1] Cf. *loc. cit.* p. 51.

for any crime but "for the name." How early they began to use this formulated protest does not appear. It was probably seized upon as early as they began to experience active, though as yet sporadic and unofficial, malevolence. It must have been confirmed when they became acquainted with the Gospels. For the phrase was not one invented by them for their own occasion. It had its source in the utterances of Jesus Christ himself. He had repeatedly warned his disciples that they should be hated and persecuted of all men for his name's sake.[1] It would appear quite absurd to suppose that he was therein prophetically formulating the legal charge that was to be brought against them, when in the days to come they should be apprehended and arraigned before the courts. Yet some modern students have strangely insisted upon so understanding it. Of course he meant only that loyalty to his person and his teachings would infallibly bring his disciples into conflict with the powers of the world, whose ideal was unalterably opposed to his. On the one side would be arrayed all the popular tendencies of the age, on the other side the doctrine of Christ. His followers must of course abstain from every act or even appearance of evil in the moral sphere; but they must not expect thereby to escape the hatred of all men, exhibited toward them because they were loyal to the name of Christ rather than to the established customs and mode of life of the heathen among whom they dwelt.

It has been somewhat the fashion to find evidence in the New Testament that even as early as the apostolic age Christians actually were condemned before the courts on the sole charge of being Christians ("for the name"), and that therefore membership in the Christian association constituted even then a legal crime. The basis for the popular belief is the ex-

[1] Cf., *e.g.*, Matt. v. 11; x. 22; xix. 29; Mark xiii. 13; Luke xxi. 12, 17; Acts ix. 15, 16; xxi. 13.

hortation of St. Peter (1 iv. 15-16): "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men's matters;[1] but if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name." The echo in this utterance of the reported teaching of Christ himself is immediately evident; but the unprejudiced classicist will surely find in the passage no indication whatever that the apostle has reference to any legal process. He will probably even insist that the concluding phrase ("in this name," ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τούτῳ) is not connected otherwise than verbally with the later Christian plaint of suffering "for the name," but is merely borrowed from the commercial language of bookkeeping, and means no more than "under this account"; that is, "let him reckon that he is but sharing in the sufferings of Christ, and is thereby incurring a credit instead of a loss."

Consider also the acts specified in what appears to be a descending series in order of criminality. Busybodies were doubtless as detestable a source of mischief then as now, but their activities were certainly not censurable and restrainable by legal process. The apostle is manifestly speaking only of the social repute of Christians in the community in which they dwelt; and this interpretation is abundantly substantiated by his words in the verse immediately preceding: "If ye are reproached in (ἐν) the name of Christ, blessed are ye." Undeserved reproach certainly causes suffering, but it is a very different thing from legal pains and penalties.

The interpretation thus put upon St. Peter's words is also amply justified by the consideration of the tenour of the entire letter. The Churches in the provinces of Asia Minor north of Taurus (for only

[1] The rendering of the unique word ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος in the Vulgate is *alienorum appetitor*, which might mean the same thing as the English translation, but is more likely to mean "a coveter of other men's goods."

such provinces are mentioned in the address) were reported to be suffering from active and virulent hatred on the part of the heathen, and perhaps also of the Jews. They were believed to need encouragement, and accordingly St. Peter writes to them from his distant place of residence (in Babylon) in order to strengthen their spirits to endure suffering as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, giving no just cause of offence by any laxity of living in either great or small matters, but showing themselves upright and honourable in every relation of life, whether social or political (cf. ii. 11 ff.). The apostle, as a man of intelligence, could hardly have failed to recognise that the growing social animosity against the Christians as such would in all probability develop into trumped-up accusations before the courts. This would of course be also in accord with Christ's prophecy. But there is no intimation in the epistle that in any general way, at least, this stage had already been reached; and the similarity of the expressions of the writer to those in the Epistle to the Hebrews (see p. 114) looks in the same direction.

Incidentally it is of interest to note that the categories of evil-doing mentioned as charged against the Christians by the irresponsible malevolence of popular gossip do not include acts of political disloyalty. When the faithful are bidden by St. Peter to "be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake" (ii. 13), this is mentioned only as a part of the perfect rectitude of conduct which they are charged to cultivate. Such loyal obedience is not urged upon them that it may serve to obviate or to be an answer to any specific charge of political disaffection. Only social crimes and misdemeanours form the staple of the slanderous reports circulating and gaining credence among the populace. The time for allegations of political criminality was evidently not yet.

The First Epistle General of St. Peter might appear to have been written some years later than the date

of the missionary journeys of St. Paul; for Churches are apparently regarded therein as well established in regions that formed a part of the territory of St. Paul's pioneer evangelistic labours. There is also much to be said for the view of F. W. Lewis (*Expositor*, ser. 5, vol. x. pp. 319-20) that the epistle must have been written after the death of St. Paul, and this for more reasons than that chiefly advanced by Mr. Lewis. But the date of St. Paul's death is highly disputable. A date for the epistle in the late sixties of the first century would probably suit well enough, to the classicist's mind, the conditions mirrored as those in the provinces mentioned. But the matter is not one of importance for the present discussion.[1] The attempt of some scholars to connect the epistle in time and circumstance with the persecution of Christians by Nero will be mentioned in the later chapter on that episode.

The words of St. Peter have been lamentably maltreated and twisted out of their natural meaning by some latter-day students. They could not possibly have been so misunderstood by the persons to whom they were addressed, who were suffering from the sting of social enmity, and from the bitter tongues of their slanderous heathen (and perhaps also Jewish) neighbours, who were saying "all manner of evil against [them] falsely for [his] sake."

On the lips of the early Christians the assertion, "We are made to suffer for the name," was an excellent rhetorical watchword, useful as a rallying-cry for mutual encouragement, and as an effective forensic protest against their enemies. It embraced conveniently both legal and extra-legal persecution. It doubtless expressed in one great sense the truth; for if the victims had not been Christians they would not have suffered thus. But the important question is

[1] See, however, perhaps most conveniently, the summary of views in James Moffatt, *An Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*, pp. 338 ff.

whether in case of legal action taken against them the only necessary charge was, "You are a Christian." If this appears to be the case, it remains to be shown how that was justified as a sufficient charge from the standpoint of the Roman administration.

That it was actually the case under certain circumstances of which we have trustworthy information, may be regarded as established. The persecutions under Nero and Trajan are early instances in point.[1] As regards the later period of the second century, and the more sporadic acts of persecution, the utterances of the Christian apologists are certainly specific, however carefully they may need to be weighed as *ex parte* forensic pleadings. They certainly represent that Christians were arraigned before the magistrate charged with no other crime than that of being Christians; that this one fact was the only one inquired into by the court; and that unless the accused consented to abjure his professed religion, condemnation followed on that ground, and on that ground only.

It should of course be remembered that of the court procedure against Christians we have only Christian accounts, except for the cases in Bithynia that came before Pliny and perhaps in some part those summarised in certain *acta martyrum*, a class of documents that will be briefly mentioned later. It is for the most part one-sided testimony ; or rather, it is not testimony at all, but the plea of the counsel for the defence. Evidently that must be listened to with some reserve. The apologists show themselves by no means unskilled rhetoricians. Are they to be judged entirely innocent of tendency to exaggeration, or of partisan selection, statement, and interpretation of facts ? If they were so, they would certainly be miraculous creatures of their age, and would probably have been regarded then as utterly inefficient pleaders of their

[1] But with certain limitations which will be pointed out in the pertinent later chapters: cf. also p. 65.

case. Yet we cannot always check their intimations and assertions by reference to statements on the other side, nor is it possible to determine just how much allowance must be made, and just at what points, for their natural exuberance of rhetoric. We can only recognise that their representations cannot reasonably be accepted with entirely unquestioning confidence.

Yet when all due allowance is made for the necessarily partisan attitude of mind of the apologists, there appears no reason to doubt the formal accuracy of their representation that Christians were (perhaps not always nor often, but frequently enough to justify their protests) arraigned and condemned on the sole charge of being Christians—in no improper sense of the phrase, condemned "for the name." It will be remembered that this is notwithstanding the equally indubitable fact that no legal enactment was in existence during the first two centuries that made it a statutory offence to be a Christian. On what principle, then, did the courts proceed?

The persecutions under Nero and Trajan form the subject of special discussion in later chapters. Here it will be convenient to mention only in what general way they may be properly classed together. Roman custom permitted a virtual, if not a formal, decision to be rendered against a whole group of persons who were believed, on evidence held sufficient, to be banded together to commit crimes. No overt act needed thereafter to be proved against any individual member of the group in order to ensure his condemnation. It was enough to establish his membership in the condemned association. Arranged in syllogistic form, the process against the Roman Christians under Nero and the Bithynian under Trajan ran: "The members of the Christian association are jointly and severally guilty of such-and-such a crime; this defendant is a Christian; therefore he is guilty." To the Christian, conscious of moral innocence, this was to be persecuted

" for the name "; to the Roman authority it was to be convicted for a crime that would have been duly punished also in case of a non-Christian. The truth of the major premiss was by him accepted ; by the Christian it was denied. In the persecution of Nero the specific crime that underlay the accusation that the persons arraigned were Christians, was arson. It was not nonconformity to the State religion. Under Trajan it was the maintenance of a *collegium* after all *collegia* in the province of Bithynia had been forbidden by special imperial decree. It was again not nonconformity to the State religion. But what was the crime that formed the moral foundation for the legal condemnation of Christians " for the name " in the cases mirrored in the pleadings of the second-century apologists? Or was there no crime at all that served as the pretext for legal action, but purely and solely hostility to the profession of a certain religious faith?

The latter of the alternative questions may be unhesitatingly answered in the negative. It is true that in theory every citizen and subject of the Roman realm owed allegiance to her religious as fully as to her political system. But the examination of Roman history from beginning to end shows very slight indication of any tendency to interpret the requisite religious conformity as necessarily an exclusive conformity, such as that which Jew and Christian alike acknowledged as the demand of their One and Only God. Of course the Roman was bound to an exclusive political allegiance, and had been from the beginning; he could not divide his loyalty between two or more sovereign powers. Since in earliest days the national religion was merely one aspect of the corporate political system, it would seem altogether likely that exclusive religious conformity would at that period be as rigorously exacted as would exclusive political conformity. But the Roman was not devoted to the consistent following out of mere theories. With all his regard

for precedent, he did not worship it. He more frequently let sense and reason guide, and mental evolution work out its silent processes. The tacit permission that came to be accorded to Roman citizens to join with their conformity to the national religion the worship also of alien divinities must have been a product of slow development through the early centuries of the republic. It was doubtless helped on by the widening outlook of a growing nation, and the consequent increase of its primitive pantheon. To the old gods, the hoary *indigites*, was now joined a swarm of *di nouensiles*. The gods of other cities of the Latin League, the deities of the Italian allies, certainly could not be treated as intrusive foreigners. The Greek divinities were adopted and incorporated *en masse*. Surely no continued limitation (*salua religione*) of the free extension of choice by the individual could be expected, when the ancient barriers were being thus thrown down. Of course the State could not fail to arrive at the perception that additional devotions would not in practice make men less orthodox and loyal citizens, so long as these rites did not involve or lead to active dissent from the national cult-principles. If they ever came to do so, that would indeed be another thing ; but the Roman was in general inclined to cross a bridge only when he came to it, and then in the most convenient fashion.[1]

[1] Professor H. M. Gwatkin (*Early Church History*, i. 119) declares that "the Twelve Tables had long ago forbidden Roman citizens to have gods in private, or to worship new or foreign gods unauthorised by the State," and in a footnote quotes, in poor text, and without ascription to source, a sentence actually from Cicero, *De legibus*, ii. 8. 19 *separatim nemo habessit deos neue nouos neue aduenas nisi publice adscitos ; priuatim colunto quos rite a patribus [cultos acceperint]*. Professor Gwatkin is seriously in error. Cicero is professedly not quoting here any actual laws present or past, but is framing, in style, as he smilingly remarks, not just like that of the Twelve Tables, but yet more antique than present-day colloquialism, an ideal scheme of laws for the State. My son calls my attention to the fact that Voltaire (*Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations*, Introd. par. 1) makes the same mistake as Professor Gwatkin, citing Cicero's words in *De leg.* ii. 8, but affirming that Cicero was quoting from the Twelve Tables. I now observe that H. B. Workman (*Persecution in the Early Church*, p. 76, n. 3) also represents Cicero in the passage cited as quoting from the Twelve Tables, and even refers to Huschke's *Iurisprudentiae Anteiustinianae quae supersunt* "for a convenient text of these Twelve Tables." The extant

Now and then the growth of religious freedom or laxity may have suffered a temporary check, when some public calamity turned the careless minds of men to the ancient standards of faith. Thus Livy (iv. 30. 11; 426 B.C.) narrates that in a time of pestilence the evil was attributed to the anger of the gods, and the aediles were bidden see to it *ne qui nisi Romani dii, neu quo alio more quam patrio, colerentur*.[1] But at a later day of terror (204 B.C.) the Romans adopted an opposite expedient; they did not decrease by expulsions the number of their spiritual allies, but added to them by enlisting another from Asia Minor, the Great Mother of the Gods. In all the cases of repressive action against unofficial cults, there is no other indication of any tendency to enforce exclusive conformity, but at the most only conformity.[2] From these actions only Jews and Christians suffered, not because the Roman state had any especial antipathy against Judaism or Christianity (it was indeed especially liberal toward Jews), but merely because these sectaries were the only ones in the realm that had a theory of exclusive religious conformity all their own, and held to it in defiance of Rome. The State could for a long period be "too proud to fight," though there finally came a time when it must either fight or tamely acknowledge a super-power within its own borders. This, after having made various ineffective

fragments are, however, not included in the work cited, though they may be found in Bruns' *Fontes iuris romani antiqui*. But the passage from Cicero *De legibus* will of course not be found among them. It may be remarked that Cicero in his ideal scheme was more archaistic with regard to conformity than was the Roman state of his day. Probably neither he nor the act of 426 B.C. had any reference to the conduct of other than Roman citizens.

[1] The mental attitude indicated appears not to differ essentially from that exhibited centuries afterward, when in the excitement of any public misfortune the people were wont to raise the cry, "Christians to the lion!" (Tert. *Apol.* 40 *et saep. al.*).

[2] The occasional suppression of a foreign cult on account of criminal practices (cf. pp. 35 f.) had of course nothing to do with conformity. Neither had Nero's action against Christians. In the second century (after Trajan's time) Roman official action against Christians mixed up the question of moral delinquency with that of conformity, and tended toward emphasis upon the latter. In the third century the only real issue was on conformity.

concessions, it naturally refused to do, and the war was on.

But for the time the Roman tacitly conceded freedom of worship, and expected in connection with that concession civic conformity, but seldom thought it necessary to enforce it. The gravest difficulty that the Roman administrator had with regard to the Christian arose from his own utter inability to disconnect in his mind the concept of a theoretical religious conformity from that of a perfect civic loyalty, or to comprehend that there could possibly exist in the human breast any such conscientious self-inhibition of the worship of more than one god. The Roman might habitually worship one god or a hundred. Certainly no conscientious scruples confined him to one only, however much his intellectual or aesthetic beliefs might limit his range of devotion. Accordingly he was free to bow an indifferent, civil assent to the State religion, and to neglect it without formally rejecting it; and he could not believe that any one else could really have any conscience in such an abstract matter. No one else did except Jew and Christian, and the Jew, fool though he was and knave though he might be, was protected from inquisition in this regard by special privileges of long standing. The Christian, however, had no established privileges. He was a proper subject for judgement. He had no licence to be a fool, like the Jew ; he must therefore be secretly a knave. But even so, he might be let alone, if he did nothing to scandalise the community. With regard to his lack of reverence for his country's gods (including of course His official Holiness, the Emperor), well, if it went no farther than a not too clamorous disregard, *deorum iniuriae dis curae*.[1]

That was the historical Roman attitude of mind and of administration. There never had been in

[1] As Tiberius humorously said when declining to avenge an alleged slight to the divinity of the deified Augustus (Tac. *Ann.* i. 73. 5.)

Republic or Empire any jealous hostility of official faith against unofficial faith. And despite the theoretical expectation of conformity—never, of course, unless in very early times, an exclusive conformity—no attempt was made by the Roman government within a period of which we have any knowledge to enforce conformity in even the slightest degree from any motive that we might call one of purely religious rivalry or of theological partisanship.[1]

Furthermore, there is no indication in the utterances of the apologists that they understood the Roman officials in the arraignment and condemnation of Christians "for the name" to be prompted to action by any theological motives whatever. They all declare, when they say anything that touches upon the matter now at issue, that the judges believe Christians to be guilty of certain specified crimes, and that this wrong belief colours and dictates their action.

What, then, was the crime, or what were the crimes, of which the judges believed the Christians to be universally guilty, and therefore summarily condemned them "for the name"? This question can best be answered by examination of the writings of Tertullian, and especially of his *Apology*. For Tertullian was not merely the latest of the apologetic writers of the period concerned in this present discussion, whose argument might therefore be regarded as summing up those of his predecessors. His plea is the most detailed, and presents most fully and clearly the legal aspects of the matter, as might be expected from the fact that he was a lawyer before he became a priest. Some of his flamboyant rhetoric is, to be sure, rather irrelevant to the issue — an argument *ad captandum* directed more to the ears of the world outside than to

[1] Mommsen has a very pertinent remark on this matter (*Ges. Schr.* iii. p. 395, n. 2), "Die Staatsreligion war den damaligen Christenhetzern genau so gleichgültig, wie die christliche Religion es den Antisemiten ist." Even the great riot at Ephesus in behalf of Artemis was due to commercial and not to theological interests (Acts xix. 23 ff.).

those of the legally minded provincial governors to whom his treatise is professedly addressed. But this overflowing declamation need not confuse us. From its intricate flood we can rescue the items that concern our purpose.

As a preliminary to the discussion of Tertullian's putting of the case, it may be remarked that very evidently the legal processes which he and the other apologists have in mind are not those of the formal trial (*iudicium*) but of the more informal *cognitio*, as regularly conducted by governors in their provinces, and at Rome by the emperor or his delegates. Even in the capital the standing *quaestiones* were yielding place, or had yielded place, to this system of criminal judicature, which was, to be sure, old in its fundamental principle, but new in its extension. About the details of the procedure in the *cognitio* we are none too well informed;[1] but an essential feature of it was that the competent magistrate, sitting of course with a *consilium* of advisers, acted as both judge and jury, and exercised as well the powers of the French *juge d'instruction*. He conducted the case, examined the accused and the witnesses for prosecution and defence, and passed sentence. He was of course guided in his procedure by law and precedent, but he seems to have had a somewhat elastic power of discretion. He certainly appears, however, to have been bound by the usual principle that a defendant who pleaded guilty to the charge could not be acquitted, and judgement must be rendered against him on the basis of his confession alone without the introduction of further testimony.[2] The judge might, to be sure, inquire further into the case, but that could be merely to determine the degree of culpability (where there was a graduated scale of penalties) or the possible

[1] Cf. the articles on *cognitio* in the Pauly-Wissowa *Real-encyclopädie* and Daremberg-Saglio *Dictionnaire des antiquités*, with the literature there cited.

[2] Cf. Tert. *Apol.* 2 *nisi fallor enim, leges . . . confessos damnari praescribunt, non absolui*; and the cases that came before Pliny in Bithynia (p. 185).

existence of accomplices.[1] And he was the sole judge of fact as well as of law. He was confined by no strict rules of evidence. If in his judgement the defendant was guilty, guilty he was. It made no difference how the magistrate arrived at this decision. Apparently public repute might have great weight with him against a defendant, even if it was supported by no evidence conclusive as to overt acts.[2] Evidently the Christian might be in sad case before such a court, if the judge shared, as the apologists presume he did, in the popular conviction that the Christians were guilty of actual crimes in their gatherings, and were disloyal citizens. If in answer to the first question of the interrogatory the defendant acknowledged that he was a Christian, that might be considered tantamount to a plea of guilty, and the investigation need proceed no farther. No extenuating evidence could be admitted. The magistrate could avoid pronouncing condemnation only by persuading the defendant to retract his confession of faith,[3] or to prove his good citizenship by a formal act of adoration of the national gods. If we may trust the indications in Tertullian,[4] this the magistrates constantly tried to bring about, but in vain. The consequent sentence of conviction was to the Christian essentially "for the name"; to the magistrate it was essentially for the crimes connected with the name. We need not blame the apologists for their persistent and vehement assertion of their view of the case, but it ill becomes a critical modern student to be swept away by the torrent of

[1] Cf. Tert. *Apol.* 2 *si de aliquo nocente cognoscatis, non statim confesso eo nomen homicidae uel sacrilegi uel incesti uel publici hostis, ut de nostris elogiis loquar, contenti sitis ad pronuntiandum, nisi et consequentia exigatis, qualitatem facti, numerum, locum, modum, tempus, conscios, socios . . . neque enim ideo non putaretis requirenda quaestionibus scelera, quia certi essetis admitti ea ex nominis confessione, qui hodie de confesso homicida, scientes homicidium quid sit, nihilo minus ordinem extorquetis admissi.*

[2] I have read somewhere that the verdict "guilty on habit and repute" was one time good in Scottish law. It was certainly good law in a Roman *cognitio.*

[3] This principle of procedure appears to have been first introduced by Trajan's rescript to Pliny, and to have been generally followed in the succeeding reigns (cf. p. 197).

[4] Cf. Tert. *Apol.* 2.

apologetic rhetoric. He may better keep his justified sympathy with the Christian sufferers at a safe distance from the neighbourhood of his historical judgement.

It needs also to be remembered that the good old English rules that an accused person must not be forced to incriminate himself (this rule is frequently set at defiance by police action in the United States of America), and that he must be considered innocent unless and until he is legally proved guilty, were not recognised in Roman procedure, which resembled its modern descendant, the French system, rather than the English.

The generalisations of Tertullian create grave difficulty for the student. Tertullian includes all the provincial governors under the same sweeping condemnation. He apparently gathers up all the information of hostile action that he can anywhere find mentioned in ranging over an indefinite period of the past, sums everything up as hatred of and condemnation for "the name," and lays his unassorted charges at the door of the governors as a class. He makes no exceptions in his arraignment. All are guilty in equal measure. He speaks as if the Christians were being relentlessly and without cessation hurried off in batches to death or penal servitude. Of course this is only violent rhetorical exaggeration. There can have been no such continuous and malignant persecution constantly going on as he depicts. He indicates no variety in the cases. Once only in all his treatise does he mention a specific instance. He states that a Christian woman had recently been condemned to the brothel. He does not say where this was done ; but as such a punishment was a penalty sanctioned by law under certain circumstances,[1] the

[1] Mommsen is inclined to think that this was not a recognised legal penalty, but that when it was visited upon Christian women, it was by arbitrary action of the magistrate. Probably his judgement was due to the fact that no authority can be cited from the law-books for such a sentence, and the only instances known are those mentioned by Christian writers. See his *Römisches Strafrecht*, p. 955, and the

truth of his declaration need not be challenged. Yet in this one case also he ascribes the responsibility to all the governors alike,[1] by using the plural verb. Evidently some allowance must be made here for the effect of emotional enthusiasm, and as evidently it must also be made elsewhere. It may very well be that when Tertullian appears to quote the action or the utterances of the magistrates, he is making out a general case from an incidental decision or an *obiter dictum* of a single judge, or is transforming an actual remark into the words that he insists represent the true spirit of it. Yet the classicist constantly finds that certain modern writers are accustomed to take everything that Tertullian says at its face value, without the slightest critical examination of his rhetorical method.

Tertullian represents the judges as declaring that in the condemnation of Christians they are but enforcing the laws (*leges*). He even says the judges affirm that the Christians have no right to exist.[2] But when his sentences are read with care, it is evident that he is dealing only with court-made law, a body of decisions and precedents only, which the magistrates might

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citations in his note 6. Yet Tertullian does not challenge the formal legality of the penalty; and a master might punish a female slave by selling her to a *leno*, if he could show good cause to the magistrate for his action (cf. *Vit. Hadr.* 18 *lenoni et lanistae seruum uel ancillam uendi uetuit causa non praestita*). It appears possible that in these cases of Christians only female slaves were concerned, and the penalty was inflicted by the master with the approval of the court. There is no reason to suppose that there were many cases of this sort. Later Christian writers would copy, as usual, the statements of their predecessors, and perhaps enlarge them. On exposure in a brothel (as in the alleged cases of Agnes and Irene) see Auger, *Die Frau im römischen Christenprozess*, in Texte und Untersuchungen, N.F. 13 (1905), 4, who thinks the procedure rested upon the idea (as in the case of the daughter of Sejanus) that no virgin could be subjected to capital punishment.

[1] *Apol.* 50 *proxime ad lenonem damnando Christianam potius quam ad leonem confessi estis labem pudicitiae apud nos atrociorem omni poena et omni morte reputari* (cf. also *De monogamia* 15).

[2] *Apol.* 4 *sed quoniam, cum ad omnia occurrit ueritas nostra, postremo legum obstruitur auctoritas aduersus eam, ut aut nihil dicatur retractandum esse post leges, aut ingratis necessitas obsequii praeferatur ueritati, de legibus prius concurram uobiscum ut cum tutoribus legum. iam primum cum dure definitis dicendo, "non licet esse uos," et hoc sine ullo retractatu humaniore praescribitis, uim profitemini et iniquam ex arce dominationem, si ideo negatis licere, quia uultis, non quia debuit non licere.*

disregard, if they saw fit, in the higher interests of justice. All of his extended argument shows this. Tertullian believes Nero and Domitian to have been persecutors of the Church. Therein he is apparently following Suetonius, Melito, and Hegesippus, with whose works he was acquainted. But he challenges the governors to point out a single other emperor who was actively hostile against Christianity.[1] Marcus Aurelius he even claims as in some degree an actual protector of it. Tertullian urges the governors to acquaint themselves with the true doctrines and practices of Christianity, since he is confident that with this access of knowledge will come an alteration in their attitude of hostility and a change in their practice of condemnation.[2] This of course assumes that the law, in the sense meant by the pleader, is within their control. Evidently he has no notion of the existence of any standing legislation against Christianity, or of any general principle of legal action that it did not lie within the competence of the magistrates to change by a change in the trend of their decisions. This perfectly agrees with what we have every reason to believe on other grounds was the legal status of Christianity and of Christians at this period.

The utterance professedly quoted by Tertullian from the lips of the magistrates, "You have no right to exist (*non licet esse uos*)," is frequently cited in modern writing as a summary of the attitude of the Roman state toward Christians at this period. They are understood to be legally classified as outlaws. That is certainly a false interpretation. Tertullian may be merely expressing in a phrase what he insists is the essence of the magistrates' attitude toward Christianity: or he may be quoting some petulant

[1] *Apol.* 5 *ceterum de tot exinde principibus ad hodiernum diuinum humanumque sapientibus edite aliquem debellatorem Christianorum! at nos e contrario edimus protectorem, si litterae M. Aurelii grauissimi imperatoris requirantur*, etc.

[2] *Apol.* 1 *hanc* [sc. *ignorantiam*] *itaque primam causam apud uos collocamus iniquitatis odii erga nomen Christianorum.*

ejaculation of a single judge in a moment of disgust at the intractable bearing of the defendant before him: or—and this is most likely of all—the phrase was actually used by some magistrate merely in defining the legal status of the Christian association as a *factio illicita*, that is, an association without legally recognised right of existence in a corporate capacity.[1] The only impossible interpretation is that it expresses with technical accuracy the legal status not only of the Christian association but of each individual Christian.[2] Yet this appears to be the interpretation most frequently put upon it by zealous sympathisers with the Christian faith.

Our discussion accordingly recurs to the enumeration of the alleged crimes of Christians that are believed by them to underlie their condemnation in the courts "for the name."[3]

Toward the end of his treatise Tertullian mentions what he apparently considers the least important of the malevolent accusations popularly brought against Christians. They are declared responsible for every public calamity;[4] they are called unprofitable citizens, because they do not spend their time and their money on the sensual indulgences of the popular festivals,[5] and because they do conduct their own celebrations with sobriety and frugality.[6] Such alleged offences as

[1] Cf. p. 53. It will be remembered that Tertullian elsewhere suggests that the Christian association ought to be made a *factio licita* (cf. *Apol.* 38 *proinde nec paulo lenius inter licitas factiones sectam istam deputari oportebat?*).

[2] Cf. *Vit. Alex. Seu.* 22 *Iudaeis priuilegia reseruauit, Christianos esse passus est*: that is, Alexander Seuerus did not interfere with the privileged position of the Jews as a *factio licita*, and he silently permitted the Christians to continue their organisation and observances, though still as a *factio illicita*. The distinction between the technical and the natural sense of *esse* must always be carefully noted. The apologists tend constantly to obscure it for their own rhetorical purposes.

[3] *Apol.* 2 *scelera de quibus ex confessione nominis praesumpseratis.*

[4] *Apol.* 40 *quod existiment omnis publicae cladis, omnis popularis incommodi, Christianos esse in causam. si Tiberis ascendit in moenia, si Nilus non ascendit in arua, si caelum stetit, si terra mouit, si fames, si lues, statim "Christianos ad leonem!" adclamatur.*

[5] *Apol.* 42 *sed alio quoque iniuriarum titulo postulamur, et infructuosi in negotiis dicimur*, etc.

[6] *Apol.* 35 *propterea igitur publici hostes Christiani . . . quia uerae religionis homines etiam sollemnia eorum conscientia potius quam lasciuia celebrant.* In c. 39 the

these of course cannot be classed as legal delicts, though the popular misliking caused by them might affect the mind even of the magistrate, and render him suspicious that such perverse-minded people were very likely also guilty of more serious things. And of more serious things there were specific allegations.

Athenagoras, in his defence of Christianity addressed to M. Aurelius and Commodus, had summed up the accusation of crimes committed by Christians under three heads: treason (based on cult-matters), cannibalism, and incest.[1] The *Apology* of Tertullian repeats the same categories. Christians, according to him, are charged with the social crimes of killing children and feeding on their flesh and blood, and of practising incest, all of this as part of the rites observed in their secret gatherings.[2] They are also charged with the political crime of treason. Of this latter charge Tertullian distinguishes two varieties: abstention from the worship of the national divinities, and similar disregard of the cult of the emperor.[3] Mommsen believed that in making this division Tertullian was following the law itself, which must have distinguished a lesser form of religious treason, consisting in offences against the gods, and a greater, consisting in offences

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love-feast (ἀγάπη) is described; but though Tertullian earlier in the same chapter characterises in a general way the Christian worship, he does not mention the Eucharist.

[1] Athenag. *Suppl.* 3. 1 τρία ἐπιφημίζουσιν ἡμῖν ἐγκλήματα, ἀθεότητα, Θυέστεια δεῖπνα, Οἰδιποδείους μίξεις.

[2] *Apol.* 2 *nomen homicidae, uel sacrilegi, uel incesti, uel publici hostis, ut de nostris elogiis loquar.*

Ibid. 7 *dicimur sceleratissimi de sacramento infanticidii et post conuiuium incesto; et passim.*

[3] *Apol.* 10 "*deos,*" *inquitis,* "*non colitis, et pro imperatoribus sacrificia non penditis.*" . . . *itaque sacrilegii et maiestatis rei conuenimur:*

Ibid. 24 *crimen laesae maxime Romanae religionis:*

Ibid. 27 *satis haec aduersus intentationem laesae diuinitatis* [sc. *deorum Romanorum*].

Ibid. 28 *uentum est igitur ad secundum titulum laesae augustioris maiestatis, si quidem maiore formidine et callidiore timiditate Caesarem obseruatis quam ipsum de Olympo Iouem:*

Ibid. 35 *propterea igitur publici hostes Christiani, quia imperatoribus neque uanos neque mentientes neque temerarios honores dicant . . . in hac quoque religione secundae maiestatis, de qua in secundum sacrilegium conuenimur Christiani non celebrando uobiscum sollemnia Caesarum.*

against the divinity of the emperor.[1] As Mommsen himself conceded, there is no intimation of such a discrimination to be found elsewhere, and furthermore Tertullian's language may be otherwise explained with perfect simplicity. He is following no formal distinction of grade in the delicts, but speaks of the *secundus titulus maiestatis* as a separate thing merely for the convenience of his argument, since he wishes to point out that the Romans in practice lay more stress upon the reverence and adoration due a mere man than they do upon that allotted to the Olympian Zeus himself. It will be observed from the quotations just given in the footnote that Tertullian has no discrimination of title for the varieties of treasonable offences against religion. Each is *maiestas*, each is *sacrilegium*. And a *hostis publicus*, or a *hostis generis humani*, is, according to Tertullian, a citizen who is guilty of treason.[2]

Such is the exhibit of crimes charged against Christians according to Tertullian. For all of them alike, social or political, the magistrates were willing to accept one only expurgation, the formal act of sacrifice to the national gods, including, of course, the emperor's *genius*. Against the reasonableness of this procedure of the magistrates Tertullian vigorously urges his plaint. "It is," he insists, "an absurdly inconsistent procedure. No ordinary murderer, for example, if he deny his guilt or affirm it, is turned loose upon society on taking such a test. The charge is inquired into, and the defendant acquitted only if he is found not guilty. The magistrate believes the Christian to be a murderer. The defendant confesses, indeed, that he is a Christian, but denies that he is

[1] Cf. Mommsen, *Ges. Schr.* iii. p. 394, n. 4.

[2] To the passages already cited may be added the following: *Apol.* 2 *in reos maiestatis et publicos hostes*:

Ibid. 36 *nos qui hostes existimamur*:

Ibid. 37 [*Christianos*] *hostes maluistis uocare generis humani quam erroris humani*:

Ad Scap. 4 *pro deo uiuo* [l. *uiui ?*] *cremamur, quod nec sacrilegi nec hostes publici ueri nec tot maiestatis rei pati solent.*

a murderer. Why does not the magistrate inquire into the suspicion of murder? Why does he in the case of the Christian alone merely apply the worship-test, and pass judgement on the basis of that only? Why does he by persuasion, by threats, even by torture,[1] endeavour to make him abjure his faith? Why does he stand ready to accept such recantation as a sufficient reason for the discharge of the criminal? If the defendant is guilty of murder, he ought to be condemned; if he is innocent, he ought to be acquitted; but he manifestly ought not to be both considered guilty and yet acquitted. Let the magistrate inquire into the alleged crimes, and formally judge on the basis of these charges alone! Christianity demands inquisition; it protests against prejudiced condemnation!"

To Tertullian's appeal the magistrates might have made a very simple and sufficient answer, at least from the Roman standpoint. "They do, indeed, incline to believe the Christian association guilty of the crimes long charged against it. But into that matter they are not bound officially to enter. They are administering according to an established precedent that in its essential features dates as far back as Trajan's time, and his rescript to Pliny, and perhaps farther. If a person is charged with being a Christian, and will take the worship-test, he shall gain thereby both amnesty for the present and immunity for whatever past offences of any sort may be connected with the name. If he will not do so, he must be adjudged guilty and condemned; for whatever other crimes may or may not have been committed in the Christian conventicle, to refuse to offer sacrifice to the national

[1] Cf. *Apol.* 2. Torture would doubtless be applied only in the examination of persons of the lower classes (*humiliores*). Those of the higher classes (*honestiores*) were regularly exempt from it, as were usually all free men. But slaves were very commonly, if not regularly, examined under torture (as Pliny examined the two deaconesses), if they were suspected of not telling the truth. Some cases of the last sort probably gave Tertullian the basis for his protest.

gods and to the emperor's *genius*, when summoned by competent authority (such as this is) to do so, is to be presently guilty of treason. There can be no doubt on that point. The magistrates' action is under their general and well-understood duty and authority to compel obedience to law, whether common or statutory. It has been perfectly correct. Into questions of theory they are not disposed to enter."

The argument of Tertullian to the magistrates amounted to a plea to them to use in a way favourable to Christians their discretionary power in what was at most not a matter of statute but of mere precedent, and therefore subject to revision by individual administrative action without appeal to the legislative authority. Whether it produced any effect on the persons to whom it was nominally addressed may be doubtful. They may never have seen it. It was in manner and ultimate purpose like an "open letter" printed in a newspaper of the present day. It was meant to influence public opinion. Let us hope it did so. But there is no indication that Christianity was entering upon better times as far as its legal status was concerned. It was, indeed, in spite of its continued growth, to see much worse times in the third century than in the second, because of the strengthening conviction on the part of the State that its ideals and those of the Christians were fundamentally incompatible.

Before leaving these general considerations regarding the persecutions, a word may be said about a very interesting class of early documents, the *acta martyrum*. Under this general title are included ancient accounts of the trials of Christian martyrs, which were circulated as edifying tracts among the Christians of the early centuries. To the *acta* proper, which were in their form (as the technical word *acta* implies) abstracts of the court-proceedings, at least in case of the earlier *acta*, were often joined brief accounts of the death (*passiones*)

of the sufferers.[1] Very few of the *acta* can be assigned to the first two centuries, and these are at best Christian editings of the reports of the trials. Some modern writers, inspired by the usual passion for making the most of what evidence we have, and prompted by the curt reporter-style of some of the *acta*, have asserted that at least these may be actual transcripts from the court-records made by permission of the proper officials. Of course that is not impossible, though it may appear improbable. At all events, the proceedings could hardly have been as brief and summary as the accounts, if regarded as complete and *verbatim*, would imply. Doubtless these have at least been edited and condensed, and in the process the Christian revisers naturally may have left out much that would be of great interest to the modern critical student, but would not appear to the original editors of the tracts to be essential to that edification which was their sole object in the publication. It would be very desirable to have the *acta* which have any plausible claim to early origin again critically sifted and analysed. As matters now stand, any general deductions from them must be made with great caution, and probably it is better to avoid such generalisations altogether. Certainly the great mass of the *acta* are almost as untrustworthy for historical purposes as the other apocryphal literature already mentioned.

[1] The fullest amount of such material is contained in the gigantic *Acta Sanctorum quotquot toto orbe coluntur* edited by the Jesuit fathers (the "Bollandists"), of which the first volume was issued in 1643, and the series is not yet completed. A more usable collection is Th. Ruinart's *Acta Sanctorum Martyrum sincera et selecta* (1713^2, reissued at Regensburg, 1859). A very convenient small collection is O. v. Gebhardt's *Acta Martyrum selecta* (Berlin, 1903).

For a fuller account of the literature, with some criticism, see K. J. Neumann, *Der römische Staat und die allgemeine Kirche*, i. (Lpz., 1890), pp. 274-331.

CHAPTER IV

THE PERSECUTION BY NERO

It is the first of the imperial persecutors whose attack upon Christians forms the subject of this chapter. The only independent descriptive account of this initial persecution is to be found in the pages, not of any Christian, but of a pagan historian. Tacitus gives it in his *Annals* (xv. 44), and he is supported by a single brief sentence in Suetonius (*Nero* 16). This is the total pagan evidence of the episode. The earliest Christian reference to it that is indubitable dates from more than a century after Nero's reign, and is hardly more than an affirmation of the bare fact that Nero was for a time a persecutor.[1] Nor do the Christian writers of the two next succeeding centuries add anything to this simple affirmation except the statement that Nero put to death at Rome the apostles Peter and Paul. Only when we arrive at Sulpicius Seuerus, in the early years of the fifth century, do we find any more elaborate statement,[2] nor is what he adds from any new authority. Sulpicius had read the *Annals* of Tacitus, and reproduces in some measure his account of the persecution, subjoining the then universally accepted Christian statement that Sts. Peter and Paul suffered death under Nero. Apparently Sulpicius understood, as some of his predecessors had done, that their martyrdom was at the same time as that of the rest of the Christians executed by Nero's order.

[1] Melito ap. Eus. *H.E.* iv. 26 (190). [2] Sulp. Seu. *Chron.* ii. 29.

Later in this chapter the Christian evidence concerning the Neronian persecution will be considered in detail; the pagan evidence is to be examined first.

In the year of our Lord 64 a conflagration started in the very centre of Rome. It raged for some nine days, destroying half or more of the city, including many of its most venerated memorials, and leaving homeless vast masses of its population. Measures for relief and rebuilding were promptly undertaken by the Government, and apparently were carried out with vigour and on the whole with wisdom, even though also with ostentation and at great cost. Certainly they resulted in making Rome a more beautiful and convenient as well as a safer and more wholesome place to live in. But the people yet murmured, and, says Tacitus,

"All human efforts, all the munificence of the emperor and propitiations offered the gods, failed to banish the sinister rumour and belief that the fire had been in consequence of an order. Therefore to dispel the report Nero made a scapegoat of others, and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, whom the populace called Christians. The Christus from whom the name had its origin had been executed during the reign of Tiberius by the procurator Pontius Pilate. The mischievous superstition was thus checked for the moment, but was reviving again, not only in Judaea, the original seat of the evil, but even in the capital, where all that is anywhere hideous or loathsome finds its centre and flourishes. Accordingly some were first put on trial; they pleaded guilty, and upon information gathered from them a large number were convicted, not so much on the charge of arson as because of their hatred of humanity. Wanton cruelty marked their execution. Covered with the skins of wild beasts, they were torn in pieces by dogs, and thus perished; many were crucified, or burned alive, and even set on fire to serve as an illumination by night, after daylight had expired.[1]

[1] The apparently somewhat corrupt text may be emended by reference to the copied account in Sulpicius Seuerus, whose text of Tacitus apparently said that the cross and the pyre were the penalties adjudged, and some of those condemned to the latter punishment were exhibited in the guise of living torches (see his account quoted on p. 122).

Nero had offered his own gardens for the spectacle, and exhibited races, mingling with the crowd in the garb of a charioteer, or himself driving. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion ; for it was not, it seemed, for the common weal, but to glut the cruelty of one man, that they were being destroyed."

This lurid picture affords us our only description of the Neronian persecution. Suetonius merely says, in enumerating certain praiseworthy deeds of Nero,

"Christians were put to death, a class of men devoted to a novel and baleful superstition."

Probably because of his fashion of arranging his anecdotes by classes, he does not connect these prosecutions with either the burning of Rome (which, like Pliny the Elder [1] and Dio,[2] he directly charges upon Nero [3]) or with the spectacles that the emperor delighted in giving.

Evidently all fruitful discussion of the persecution by Nero must ultimately be based upon the account in Tacitus. Curiously enough, this has been assailed from almost every possible standpoint. Within the memory of plenty of men yet living there has been put forth the serious assertion [4] that the text of the *Annals* as we have it is altogether a fifteenth-century forgery by the humanist Poggio. In view of the fact that the two extant manuscripts which form our only independent authority for the text of the two extant parts of the *Annals* are indubitably of the ninth and the eleventh century respectively, the absurd heresy would hardly seem to call for that further and more elaborate refutation that has been framed against it. But a generation ago historical scholars were not so confident

[1] Plin. *N.H.* xvii. 5 ; but some have thought the charge to be a later interpolation into Pliny's text.

[2] Cass. Dio lxii. 16.

[3] Suet. *Nero* 38. 1.

[4] By P. Hochart in his book *De l'authenticité des Annales et des Histoires de Tacite* (1890) ; cf. also his *Études au sujet de la persécution des chrétiens sous Néron* (1885), and his *Nouvelles considérations*, etc. (1894) ; also by Ross in *Tacitus and Bracciolini ; the Annals forged in the fifteenth century* (1878).

as they may be now of the ability of palaeographers to determine with accuracy questions of the genuine antiquity and more or less precise date of manuscripts, so that perhaps it was well to make assurance doubly sure. The historical defence was based chiefly on the examination of the many agreements in statement between the *Annals* and other ancient documents, including inscriptions, that could not possibly have been known to Poggio or to any other man of his time.[1]

Yet even though the genuineness of the *Annals* as a whole has been conceded, it has been urged that nevertheless this passage about the persecution is nothing but an imaginatively elaborated Christian interpolation of much later date than that of Tacitus, though of course earlier than the time of Sulpicius Seuerus. It would certainly appear to be a most admirably executed forgery (if only it could be a forgery at all)—a masterpiece of dramatic effect, perfectly consonant with Tacitus in tone and manner, in specific language, in harmonious setting and adjustment. It is so beautifully welded into its place that no sign of its junction can be detected. It is quite out of correspondence in quality with considerable Christian work that we now judge to be certainly forgery. That is all without literary excellence: this is in its way perfect. Moreover it does not agree with these other Christian forgeries in form. If we except one or two alleged interpolations in the text of Josephus which have the character of mere brief marginal glosses later incorporated innocently into the context, these other Christian forgeries are in the shape of separate documents, supplementing or elaborated upon already accepted facts or writings. This contribution—if a forgery—would naturally have been of the same kind. It could then gain circulation apart from the circulation

[1] A convenient summary may be found in Mr. Furneaux's edition of the *Annals*, ed. 2, vol. i. pp. 8-12: see also the *Edinburgh Review* for October 1878, and the preface by H. Rostagno to the Leyden facsimile of *Codex Mediceus* 68. 1.

of the original work. There is no probability that its composer would at that period think of accomplishing his purpose by interpolating a single copy of a pagan author—not at least if he had any sense; and he must have had a great deal of sense if he could compose a passage like this. For apart from questions of style, there was certainly neither tradition nor record afloat on which he could draw for his facts. If there had been, some trace of it would surely be found in the pages of writers like Tertullian and Eusebius, neither of whom was acquainted with the *Annals*. And finally, we can be almost certain that the *Annals* of Tacitus were practically unknown to the ancient world at the time to which this interpolation could most reasonably be assigned. All of these considerations are strongly against the notion that the passage of the *Annals* under discussion is a forgery. The charge may confidently be dismissed from further attention.

But it has been pointed out that Cassius Dio, the only other ancient historian extant who treats of Nero's reign otherwise than in epitome, though he describes the Fire itself in full and vivid detail, and calls attention to the consequent ill-will of the populace toward Nero, yet says nothing of any following prosecution of alleged incendiaries, whether Christian or other.[1] To be sure, the part of Dio's history that covers this period is preserved only in an eleventh-century abbreviation by a certain Xiphilinus, besides serving as the quarry from which Zonaras, a twelfth-century chronicler, drew much of his material. But Xiphilinus was

[1] Neither Suetonius (a younger contemporary of Tacitus) nor Dio (writing a century later) appears to have been acquainted with the *Annals*. The same is true of all known writers, whether pagan or Christian, up to the time of Sulpicius Seuerus, at the beginning of the fifth century. This total lack of exhibited knowledge of that great work for three hundred years after its composition is certainly striking. The book would have furnished Tertullian and other Christian writers with much more stimulating information about the Neronian persecution than did the brief sentence in Suetonius, which appears to have been their sole source on the event. There are no valid indications that any Christian tradition about the Fire and the consequent persecution existed in the Church even as near to the event as the first part of the second century. The death of Sts. Peter and Paul was later ascribed to Nero with (for a considerable time) no more precise indication of date or circum-

himself a Christian monk, and it appears very improbable that, if Dio had even briefly mentioned any prosecution of Christians by Nero, Xiphilinus would have failed to include the statement in his somewhat full epitome. Zonaras does indeed speak of the Neronian persecution; but it is hardly credible that, if he had found any mention of it in Dio (and he apparently had access to the full text of Dio, and not merely to an abbreviated form of it), his own account would have been so precisely conformed to that of Eusebius alone as it manifestly and even professedly is. On the whole, therefore, it is an assured conclusion that Dio recorded nothing about any sufferings of Christians under Nero.

This lack of mention in Dio's work has been used in two different ways by as many distinct classes of critics. It has been cited as evidence that no persecution of Christians by Nero could have taken place, and therefore as corroborative evidence, if not as primary evidence, that the account of the persecution in Tacitus must be a mere interpolation; and on the other hand, it has been made an important part of the basis for an assault upon the sincerity of Dio as a historian in matters concerning Christianity. Each of these lines of argument requires some attention, and the latter may more conveniently be first considered.

Some Christian sympathisers, having full confidence in the authenticity of the disputed passage in Tacitus, and desiring to defend it from sceptical attack, have indeed conceded perforce that Dio's

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stance; but this belief does not appear to have arisen before the middle of the second century. One may be permitted to guess that the *Annals*, apparently completed (if completed at all) not long before the death of the author, could hardly have been put into real circulation until the emperor Tacitus (A.D. 275–6), who claimed the historian as his kinsman, took measures for the resuscitation of his works by ordering that they be transcribed ten times every year, and copies deposited in all archives and libraries (Vopisc. *Tac.* 10. 3). But the emperor must have met his end too soon for his scheme to become very effective. The *Histories* (an earlier work of Tacitus) had enjoyed better fortune, but precisely to what degree we are unable to say. Tertullian is the first Christian writer who shows acquaintance with them, and that may possibly be only at second hand.

history was altogether silent on the matter of the Christians under Nero, but have earnestly contended that this silence is but a specific exhibition of the author's general hostility to Christianity. Their conviction of this alleged enmity is founded on purely negative evidence, if it can properly be called evidence; not on any statements or intimations in his writing, but on the total lack of reference or allusion therein to Christians as such, or to the Christian faith. According to the notion of this class of critics he damns Christianity by a persistent and malignant silence about it. Now this is certainly a serious charge, and deserves serious consideration.

On examination of the convictions underlying the attitude of these critics of Dio, it becomes possible to isolate two assumptions made by them, the one more general, the other specific. The more general assumption of these assailants of Dio is that Christianity was, and had been before Dio's time, such an extremely important and influential element in the life of the body politic that no historian of the empire, even though a pagan and composing merely a general sketch of chiefly political and military affairs, could without malice prepense fail to mention the rise and activities of Christianity: the specific assumption is that extensive and virulent persecutions of Christians actually took place under both Nero and Domitian, and Dio could not have been ignorant of the fact ; his utter silence in the one case (that of Nero) and his misrepresentation—for so these critics take it to be—in the other (that of Domitian) are accordingly due to nothing else than deliberate and manifest malevolence.

One might reasonably imagine that, if Dio had formulated in his own mind a historical policy of deliberate disregard of Christianity, he would have carried it out consistently, and we should consequently find in his work as little reference to the (alleged) Domitianic as to the Neronian persecution. Why did

he not at least treat both cases alike? One could be as easily ignored as the other; neither was more susceptible of garbling in the record than the other. Yet, according to the claims of these critics, Dio in the case of Nero arbitrarily omitted all mention of prosecutions, while in the case of Domitian he asserts that the victims were charged with perversion to the practices of the Jews, when he must have known that they were accused of being Christians.

Again, in his narrative of the Great Fire, why does he omit altogether mention of the prosecution of alleged incendiaries, when, if he merely wished to avoid mention of Christians, he might so readily have passed over only that element of religious affiliation in the description, or might have called the culprits Jews or Judaisers, as he is alleged to have disguised the Christian defendants of Domitian's reign? And if he really were malevolently disposed toward Christianity, why should he prefer a policy of contemptuous silence, and not rather seize upon the manifest opportunity to cast discredit upon the Christian sect by making the most of the charges brought against it by Nero or at his instigation?

On the theory that Dio is wilfully avoiding all reference to Christianity, it appears impossible to find satisfactory answers to these questions. His good faith, if not his good judgement, ought not to be regarded as resting under suspicion on these specific counts. Whether either his good faith or his good judgement can successfully be impugned on the more general assumption remains to be discussed.

The specific assumption of both a Neronian and a Domitianic persecution is wrong in point of fact. I shall indicate in a later chapter of this book that there could not have been such a persecution of Christians by Domitian as has generally been made an article of belief by Christian writers from the time of Eusebius down to the present day; and Dio is accordingly

guilty of no misrepresentation or suppression of the truth on that point. On the other hand, if there was such a persecution under Nero, and the absence of record in Dio is not to be taken as an indication that the account in Tacitus is a mere interpolation, it is evidently necessary to show why Tacitus might naturally mention and emphasise it, and Dio as naturally neglect it. This brings us back to the more general assumption mentioned above that underlies the argument of the critics of Dio.

Doubtless to the genuine and thoroughly convinced Christian of ancient days, as to him of modern times, Christianity is in fact the most important thing in all human life. But that is not the question. The question is whether Christianity had before the end of the second century so thoroughly and prominently established itself in the civic community that not merely the common people here and there might know about it, but that also the average pagan of education and social status must perforce have become acquainted with it, and furthermore must have recognised it as by its achievements, its social position and influence, a power in the State that could not be reasonably disregarded in any general historical account of the times. That might perhaps be held to have become the position of Christianity by the end of the third century. Had it achieved such general recognition in the pagan world a century earlier? The answer must surely be in the negative. We must not be imposed upon by our own predilections, or by the excusable and even praiseworthy vigour and intense conviction with which the early Christian apologists put the case for their fellow-sectaries. The early appeal of Christianity had been rather to the lowly than to the high in the world's estimation. It was an enthusiastic religion. But the enlightened Greek or Roman of the first two centuries was as disdainful or even suspicious of religious enthusiasm as was the

Englishman of the eighteenth century. He was stiffly inaccessible to ideas that arose from below his station. The staid philosophy of the past and the secure comforts of the present satisfied his every desire. Let the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing! What did it matter? There were a hundred queer sects that sheltered under the amiable skirts of the tolerant empire. Should the composure of a gentleman permit itself to be disturbed by the insistent clamours of one of them more than of another? Jewish fanaticism had long been familiar to weariness, and these Christians, if known at all, were known to be a sect, even though perhaps an heretical sect, of contemptible Jewish origin. What did it matter?

But among the common people it was coming to matter a great deal. The rich, the aristocratic, might dwell apart, and keep themselves, when they would, from contact even with one another. The poor were by the inevitable conditions of their existence herded closely together. There was among them a necessary community of life, an intimacy of acquaintance bred of their close contact, a prying curiosity about the affairs of their neighbours.[1] Ostentatious reserve on the part of next-door residents aroused resentment, as if it were an affectation of superiority. Notorious withdrawal from free social intercourse, or abstention from popular religious festivals, which gave almost the only dash of bright colour to the dull drab of monotonous existence, was interpreted as due to gloomy moroseness. Preaching of asceticism was a robbery of the joy of life. Secrecy about religious rites, when almost all worship was open as the day, created a suspicion that there was something in them that needed to be concealed, something that violated the ordinary moralities and decencies of life. There were even rumours abroad that these Christians at

[1] It will be remembered that St. Peter (I. iv. 15) thought it necessary to counsel his fellow-Christians not to be meddlers in other men's matters.

their secret meetings ate the flesh and drank the blood of some person. They were said to prophesy a speedily coming conflagration of the world, from which they alone were to be saved. Evidently Christianity was a great conspiracy against mankind. These Christians were notorious and avowed foes to all common cheer; they were surely guilty of secret enormities, enemies of the human race.

If ever such sinister rumours about this one of a hundred sects came by chance to the notice of a Roman of high station and intelligence, he would probably listen to them with a smile, and dismiss them from his mind. But they represented the hostile view of the populace among whom the Christians chiefly lived and moved, and from whom their converts were mainly recruited in this earlier period. It must also be remembered that Christians, with all their aloofness from the amusements of the multitude, were not altogether of a retiring disposition. They may not have been inclined to cast their pearls before swine, but they were an actively proselyting folk, and their tenets were not such as to make it natural for them to be genial and conciliatory in their faithful dealings with their neighbours of other persuasions. They in some degree must have forced themselves upon the attention of the people among whom they dwelt, though these people were mainly of the lower half of society. Christianity had to seep slowly upward from the lower to the higher strata before it could fairly come to the acquaintance of the whole community, even in the cities, to which its activities were apparently at first confined. The third century, rather than the first or the second, was the period of its triumphant advance on all fronts.

There is no indication that among the mass of the people, of the higher or lower class, there was any marked and decisive change in regard to the knowledge of Christianity until at least toward the end of

the second century. Magistrates were here and there forced to deal with cases of one sort or another against Christians, but under circumstances that did not clearly and in principle set these cases apart from those of the ordinary routine that fell to their official lot. Even the persecutions were not of such a character as to leave a lasting impression on the minds of contemporaries other than the Christians themselves. If it were not for Tacitus, we should know nothing of Nero's persecution except the bare fact. Even the Christian writers up to Sulpicius Seuerus apparently knew no more about it than Suetonius told. Only Tertullian, merely copied in Eusebius and he in later writers, was aware that there had been a persecution in Bithynia. The neighbouring Melito, bishop of Sardis, one of Tertullian's predecessors as an apologist, plainly had never heard of it. Certainly pagans of the educated classes must have been even more oblivious than Christians.

There is accordingly no reason to suppose that a pagan historian living in those times, even if he perchance found a notice in some of his sources that Christians had suffered death as alleged malefactors, would see any especial cause on account of the prominence of the sect or the peculiarity of the cases for including any mention of them in his general history of the realm.

A pertinent illustrative parallel may be cited at this point from Dio himself. Mithraism was in his time a rapidly spreading and attractive cult. Competent students of the subject have asserted that it was clearly the chief rival of growing Christianity, and might well have been judged likely to become its successful rival. I am not aware that any one has claimed that Dio exhibits a plain bias against the religion of Mithra. Yet with regard to it he appears to have preserved almost as equally stubborn a silence as that which is declared to prove his malignant attitude toward

Christianity. The only allusion to Mithraism in his history is purely casual, when he reports a speech of Tiridates in which that personage declares that he comes to worship Nero as he would Mithra himself (lxiii. 5. 3).

Surely, then, in view of all these considerations Dio must be acquitted of the charge of special bias against Christianity, based upon the fact that he nowhere speaks of it; and the absence of reference in his work to the sufferings of Christians under Nero is no evidence that they did or did not take place, still less that the account in Tacitus is a mere interpolation; especially if it can further be shown that Tacitus had a particular motive for recording the event, while no particular motive, according to what has been said above, appears in Dio's case.

Tacitus was a thoroughly trained and experienced rhetorician before he became a historian. He is well versed in all the powerful forensic devices of his earlier trade, and uses them with extreme effectiveness. In the introduction to his *Annals* (i. 1) he declares that he will discuss the deeds of the Julian Caesars "without resentment and without partiality, from the reasons for which I stand far removed." But the meaning of these phrases is made clear by comparison with a corresponding passage at the opening of the *Histories* (i. 1). He would merely affirm that he was not a contemporary of the early emperors, stood in no personal relation to any one of them, and hence could have no personal prejudices from their imperial favour or neglect that might influence his free historical judgement one way or the other. But Tacitus was the last man in the world to consider it the proper function of a historian to preserve strict neutrality, though he should deal honestly. History was to him an instrument of moral purpose.[1] He was the pas-

[1] Cf., *e.g.*, *Ann.* iii. 65. 1 *praecipuum munus annalium reor, ne uirtutes sileantur, utque prauis dictis factisque ex posteritate et infamia metus sit.*

sionate partisan of an idea. The animus of the *Annals* is plain and unconcealed. To the mind of the author the inauguration of the principate was the deliberate strangling of popular liberty. The successive Caesars from Augustus to Nero were the assassins of the old commonwealth. And with the manner of a Roman counsel for the prosecution he virulently assailed not merely their public acts but their private morals, and grasped at every item that could increase the burden of obloquy that he heaped upon their tombs. For the sake of the effect upon his basic proposition, about the truth of which he was most sincerely convinced, the characters of the tyrants must be painted as black as possible. His manifest exaggerations are not peculiar to himself ; they are rather characteristic of Roman forensic rhetoric in general, and of the understood function of a Roman advocate.

Dio was a diligent and painstaking but somewhat dull compiler from other people's work. He had no special thesis to support. Tacitus also used other people's work as material for his own—used it sometimes with too little judgement and discretion—but he had a thesis to support, and did it most vigorously and vividly. He was quick to discern whatever could strengthen the effect of his picture. If Nero's cruelties were so enormous that even when wreaked upon such a popularly detested sect as the Christians, they created a reaction in the minds of the mob, that was just the element in the affair for him to seize upon and make the most of with all the tricks of his blazing rhetoric. Otherwise the little interlude of the persecution, which produced no marked effect on the general course of events, or even on early Christian tradition, might not have seemed worth mentioning. Tacitus had a motive for recording the incident which Dio had not : therefore the conclusion is strengthened that the difference between the accounts in the two

historians does not impugn the authenticity and general accuracy of the passage in the earlier writer, and the theory of a forged interpolation here may confidently be dismissed from further attention.

But though the authenticity of the passage be regarded as established, the trustworthiness of its statement that the sufferers were Christians has been called in question.

Tacitus had been *consul suffectus* for a term toward the end of the year A.D. 97.[1] Under the ordinary form of Trajan's procedure an ex-consul who had not fallen into disfavour with the emperor might expect within a few years promotion to the governorship of some province. Of Tacitus, however, no such official service was known to be anywhere reported. The conclusion of scholars naturally was that after his consulship Tacitus had withdrawn from public life to devote himself to historical composition. But the discovery in 1889 at Mylasa in Caria of a fragmentary Greek inscription made it clear that the career of Tacitus was not as exceptional for a man of his condition as had been previously supposed. He was governor of the province of Asia under Trajan, probably about A.D. 112 or 113. His *Annals* were certainly completed, if not entirely composed, at a date later than this. A full half-century had elapsed since the events of the year A.D. 64. It might seem possible, or even probable, that by the expiration of that period Romans of the educated classes, whether resident in the capital or elsewhere in the realm, could hardly be without knowledge of the existence and general reputation of the Christian sect. Yet Tacitus appears to think otherwise. He considers it necessary to instruct his readers, though briefly, about not merely the popular estimate but even the popular name of the association, as matters with which persons of their social class might be unacquainted, even though some of these

[1] Cf. Plin. *Ep.* ii. 1. 6.

facts were, as he intimates, well enough known to the common herd of the capital even as early as Nero's time. It can hardly be doubted that Tacitus could and did correctly estimate the degree of ignorance of Christianity prevalent among his contemporaries of his own rank in life;[1] for it is very improbable that in thus explaining the name, origin, and popular reputation of the insurgent sect he was writing for posterity only, with the idea that before long the association would have dissolved away, leaving not a rack behind. But however little the cultivated Roman of the days of Tacitus, or still more of Nero, might be expected to know about Christianity, the governorship of Asia had given Tacitus peculiar facilities for acquiring such knowledge. The cities of that province had been early centres for Christian propaganda, and churches appear to have been well established in them long before the end of the first century. Also these cities, or at least some of them, were centres of a strong national Roman feeling—so strong that it appears to shape itself as almost a fanatic imperial loyalty. The emperor-cult was especially vigorous in that region, and the older deities also had not lost their hold on the enthusiastic devotion of the populace. The preaching of Christianity had even in St. Paul's day aroused popular tumults in support of the great Diana of the Ephesians. Similar outbursts are reported from a later time. It is fair to judge these Asiatic cities as probably foci of oft-recurring active disturbance between pagan and Christian; and it is altogether likely that Tacitus returned to Rome from his province with no favourable opinion indeed of Christianity, but with some knowledge of it that he might not have acquired without his period of official service

[1] The brief characterisation of the Christians by Suetonius seems to indicate that he also did not suppose the mass of his readers would know who or what the Christians were. Tertullian almost a century later charges even the provincial governors with ignorance of the real nature of Christianity, and even of the correct form of the Christian name.

in the particular province, and that his fellow-citizens of his own class at Rome would hardly be expected to possess.

It is also not impossible, nor even improbable, that the early life of Tacitus was spent in Rome, and that as a boy some ten years old at the time of the occurrence, he may have retained a distinct memory of the Great Fire, and even of the executions of Christians that followed it at an interval of some months.

Yet it has been opined that in his account of these prosecutions Tacitus must have been guilty of an anachronism; that the condemned were not Christians, and could not have been, and could not have been so denominated in the authorities that Tacitus is in the main supposed to have followed; but that the brilliant historian read his sources in the light of his later acquired knowledge of Christianity, and misinterpreted them accordingly in certain details.

Even with all his later knowledge of Christianity, if Tacitus had no personal recollection of the sufferings of Nero's victims, and especially of their religious affiliation, there seems to be no reason whatever for his statement that they were Christians, in case, as is postulated, he found them otherwise denominated in the no longer extant authorities that he is supposed to have followed; and if they were not therein designated as members of any specified group of persons other than one supposedly banded together to destroy the city, there is nothing in the nature of things, and still less in the recognised methods of Tacitus as a historian, to support the proposition that he would foist upon them gratuitously an attribution that they neither claimed nor possessed, nor were supposed by his postulated authorities to have claimed or possessed. He would certainly have no reason or temptation to give them a wrong label, or to give them any class-label at all, in case he found none attached to them by preceding historians.

Furthermore Suetonius, it will be remembered, appears, from the comparison in detail of his lives of Tiberius, Claudius, and Nero with the account of these emperors in Tacitus, not to have been acquainted with the *Annals* of his elder contemporary, but to have used in some degree the same sources that were drawn upon by him. Yet Suetonius also says that Nero put Christians to death. It is extremely improbable that, if he knew anything of the occasion for the executions, he was not consciously referring to the story told in fuller detail by Tacitus; or if he was but following an authority that was briefer in treatment than the one presumably followed by Tacitus—one that mentioned the fact but not the circumstances of it—it is unlikely that this authority could have actual reference to any other occasion than that commemorated in Tacitus. It may be regarded, then, as certain that Tacitus was not drawing merely upon either his own mature imagination or a boyish memory that was fallacious in saying that Nero put Christians to death. That statement must have been made also by earlier writers. But it must be considered possible that in the narrative of the details of the executions, and perhaps even in connecting the prosecutions with the Fire, Tacitus was relying not merely upon written accounts, but upon personal memory of his own, or upon oral testimony of eye-witnesses, or upon both sources. Suppose the boy had himself stood at some lofty window and gazed out over that ocean of flame, where all the world seemed blazing in its final doom; suppose he had gone with his parents—they not daring to stay away—to that mad garden-party of Nero's by night, and had seen over the heads of the murmuring crowd the appalling vision of the course illumined by the murky glare of those writhing torches, or had even heard of the horror next morning: it must have left an indelible impression on the receptive mind of an intelligent boy of ten years; and at any

rate in later time he surely had plenty of opportunities to question well-informed contemporaries of the events. That he was accustomed to ask for such personal information as a basis for his own historical writing may be inferred from his inquiries addressed to the younger Pliny about the great eruption of Vesuvius which he had witnessed (cf. Plin. *Ep.* vi. 16. 1; 20. 1). The testimony of Tacitus on the point at issue appears to be unimpeachable, however we may explain its probable source or sources.

But in spite of all considerations to the contrary, it has been asserted that Nero's victims could not have been Christians, because at that time Christians could not have been so numerous in Rome as to attract the attention, either friendly or suspicious, of the higher class of officials, and so to be pitched upon as likely perpetrators of the alleged crime; nor could they yet have been numerous enough to furnish from their number as many victims as Tacitus is supposed to indicate. (It is, of course, not denied that there were some Christians in Rome in A.D. 64.)

The number of persons put to death in the persecution is nowhere specified. The only authority on the question is Tacitus, who says the victims formed *multitudo ingens*. That appears to mean "a great multitude," and has been frequently so translated. Certainly nothing smaller than a number to be reckoned at least by hundreds would justify the use of such a phrase by a historian writing in English for English-speaking readers. But Tacitus was a Roman writing for Romans in Roman style. Latin was a highly rhetorical language. It was fond of robust exaggeration, and doubtless the Romans knew how to interpret such utterances into matter-of-fact prose. In many different forms of expression, especially in denunciatory expression, Latin words and phrases have a colour that was not meant to be, and ought not by us to be supposed to be, an accurate reproduction of natural tints.

Tacitus was a legal pleader of long experience before he became an historian. Moreover, he is a special pleader here. He is concerned to make out as black a case as possible against Nero. He knows the value of the appeal *ad misericordiam*, and uses it.[1] His *multitudo ingens* means no more than *multi* (plain "many") from the pen of a scrupulously precise writer, if any such existed among the literary men of Rome. Even "many" is sufficiently vague, though it is also sufficiently horrible to contemplate.

The critics, therefore, who believe that the victims of Nero could not possibly have been Christians because Christians in Rome must have been too few to furnish the *multitudo ingens* from a mere fraction of their number, should not at any rate be prejudiced by those words in the *Annals* of Tacitus. The language does not really mean what it appears to them to say. This basis for doubt must be abandoned, and the inquiry carried further.

It is impossible to estimate with any accuracy the number of Christians resident in Rome in A.D. 64; nor can we say when they began to appear there.[2] Eastern

[1] From the account by Tacitus of the reign of Tiberius one might suppose that the period was an appalling orgy of innocent blood. Yet the statistics compiled from Tacitus himself and subjected to calm examination furnish a very different story (see most conveniently Baring-Gould, *Tragedy of the Caesars*, Appendix II.). A pertinent example of numerical exaggeration may be found in Tac. *Ann.* vi. 19, where in describing a great gaol-delivery of persons accused of complicity in the conspiracy of Sejanus the author says, "There lay [exposed dead on the Gemonian Stairs] the victims in untold numbers, every sex, every age, high and low, singly or heaped in piles (*iacuit immensa strages, omnis sexus, omnis aetas, illustres, ignobiles, dispersi aut aggerati*)." It is a horrifying picture of carnage. But, apparently in describing the same incident, the less impassioned Suetonius (*Tib.* 61), though no friend of Tiberius, specifies the number of the victims as twenty (*uiginti uno die abiecti* [sc., *in Scalas Gemonias*] *tractique* [sc., *ad Tiberim*], *inter eos feminae et pueri*). It is interesting, by the way, to compare the fervid rhetoric of Tacitus with the more subdued manner of his friend Pliny, who in speaking of the number of persons in Bithynia charged before him as Christians describes them (Plin. *Ep.* x. 96. 9) as *multi omnis aetatis, omnis ordinis, utriusque sexus*. Pliny is content with the simple "many," and limits the sexes to two!

[2] Orosius, to be sure, has no doubt whatever on this matter. He says (vii. 6. 1) that at the beginning of the reign of Claudius (presumably then in A.D. 41 or 42) the apostle Peter came to Rome and taught the saving faith of God, confirming his instruction by mighty miracles, and that from that time there began to be Christians in Rome. But the authority of the credulous and enthusiastic Orosius in matters

people—workmen, traders, slaves—were pouring into Rome in large numbers during the first century after Christ (every one will remember the oft-quoted plaint of Juvenal), and among the immigrants as early as the fourth or fifth decade may well have been a few Christians. It is frequently argued that this early presence of Christians in Rome is sufficiently attested by a passage in a pagan historian and by one in Holy Scripture. For Suetonius, in his life of Claudius (25. 4), says that the emperor expelled the Jews from Rome because of their continuous rioting at the instigation of one Chrestus (*Iudaeos impulsore Chresto adsidue tumultuantes Roma expulit*). As early as the fifth century the Christian Orosius (who was acquainted with the work of Suetonius) picked this passage up, and on the alleged authority of Josephus assigned the expulsion to the ninth year of the reign of Claudius (A.D. 49-50), remarking that it is impossible to determine whether Claudius took action against the Jews because they were assailing Christ, or whether he drove out the Christians also, regarding them as a sect of the Jews.[1] There is no reference to the affair in the extant works of Josephus, and none in either Tacitus or Dio (the latter as abridged by Xiphilinus). We are thrown back for pagan testimony upon the brief statement in Suetonius alone, who in regard to the fact of the expulsion is supported by a fortunate item in the Acts of the Apostles (xviii. 2) to the effect that

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of this sort may plainly be disregarded as worthless. The fable of this early appearance of St. Peter in Rome, which was apparently connected as far as date is concerned with a late attempt to account for the presence there in Claudius' time of the Christian Aquila and Priscilla (Acts xviii. 2; cf. p. 108, n.), will be discussed later.

[1] *Anno eiusdem nono expulsos per Claudium urbe Iudaeos Iosephus refert. sed me magis Suetonius mouet, qui ait hoc modo; "Claudius Iudaeos impulsore Christo [sic!] adsidue tumultuantes Roma expulit:" quod, utrum contra Christum tumultuantes Iudaeos coerceri et comprimi iusserit, an etiam Christianos simul uelut cognatae religionis homines uoluerit expelli, nequaquam discernitur* (Oros. vii. 6. 15, 16).—Of course Claudius would no more inquire into the merits of the question between riotous Jews and Christians, had there been any open quarrel at that time and place, than did Gallio. The second of the alternative explanations offered by Orosius is the only reasonable one. Jews and Christians alike were indiscriminately bundled out of the city. But it was not on account of any quarrel between them.

a certain Jew named Aquila with his wife Priscilla had recently come to Corinth from Italy, because Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome. But neither Suetonius nor the writer of the Acts gives any chronological datum. If the date assigned by Orosius on the alleged authority of Josephus be disregarded as too uncertain for credence, we must find another by tracing the chronology of St. Paul's life, who came to Corinth shortly after the arrival there of Aquila and Priscilla. But the chronology of the apostle's journeyings involves many difficult questions. Fortunately they may be disregarded here, for it is not necessary for the purpose of this essay to fix upon any particular year as that of the expulsion of Jews from Rome under Claudius. The general consideration of the events of his reign makes it altogether probable that the expulsion was carried out in the latter part of that period, and this vague determination may here suffice.[1]

Orosius evidently understood this Christus-reference (so he apparently read the name) to mean that broils had arisen in Rome between Jews and Christians, and that the phrase *impulsore Christo* embodied merely a misunderstanding of the pagan writer. In this interpretation he has been followed by many later Christian writers, who have accordingly concluded that the item in Suetonius contains evidence that, in the reign of Claudius, Christians were to be found in Rome in not inconsiderable numbers. The presence of Christians in Rome at that time is credible, and in every respect probable, but the passage in Suetonius furnishes at best very questionable evidence of the fact.

Suetonius himself, writing some three-quarters of a

[1] The learned Tillemont some two centuries ago remarked in his *Histoire des Empereurs* (ed. 2, vol. i. p. 205) that some critics preferred to disregard the statement of Orosius, and would assign the expulsion to the year 52 instead of 49, connecting it with the outbreak of the Palestinian Jews in that year. This later date seems also to be accepted by most recent scholars. It fits better than 49 into their scheme of the chronology of St. Paul's life.

century after the conjectural date of the Claudian expulsion, knew the Christians by their name and by their popular unsavoury reputation. His reference to the Neronian persecution shows that. But if he had found in his authorities for the reign of Claudius a statement that a certain Jewish demagogue named Chrestus had been the instigator of disputes among his co-religionists of the capital that finally culminated in riots, and called for severe measures by the government, there is indeed no reason to suppose that he ought to have recognised in this appellation Chrestus a reference of any sort to the founder of the Christian sect. Chrestus is a common enough name; Christus is not. The Jews in Palestine were always known to be a quarrelsome lot; they probably did not change their natures when they removed to Rome—*caelum non animum*. . . . The account found in his sources was in itself perfectly credible. No doubt about its interpretation would suggest itself to him.

But his earlier authorities might have misunderstood the affair, and have substituted a Chrestus for the unfamiliar Christus.[1] The brawls might have been actually between Jews and Christians. That would certainly appear possible. But why postulate such an explanation unnecessarily? Why insist on regarding the similarity of Chrestus and Christus as sufficient reason for adopting the view of Orosius, when there is not the slightest inherent difficulty or improbability in the straightforward statement as given in Suetonius? The critic needs constantly to beware of the natural tendency to strain evidence in

[1] Justin (*Apol.* 4. 1) implies that in his day the Christians were erroneously called by the heathen *Chrestiani* instead of *Christiani*, and Tertullian (*Apol.* 3) complains that the enemies of the Christians do not even know them by their right name, but speak of them as *Chrestiani*. Lactantius (iv. 7. 4) in repeating substantially the same statement may be merely echoing the words of Tertullian, who was acquainted with the works of Suetonius, but has nothing to say about this episode of the expulsion. We may safely guess that he did not see in it any reference to Christus or to Christians. It is possible that already in the second century and in the mouths of the common people who spoke Greek χριστός and χρηστός were beginning to be pronounced alike.

problems pertaining to the scanty history of early Christianity.[1]

Moreover, there are at least two considerations that together, or perhaps the second even by itself, invalidate the contention that these rioters were Jews against Christians. The first is concerned with the probable number of Christians, as compared with that of Jews, resident in Rome at the time. There were many Jews in the city, and the colony had been growing for a hundred years past. To be sure, a large number, but by no means all,[2] had been driven out by Tiberius. But such disciplinary purgings were never meant to be permanent,[3] and the Jewish population of the capital doubtless soon recovered from its set-back, and continued to increase, not so much by conversions (though there were some) as by births [4] and by immigration from the East. How many Jews there were in Rome at the time Claudius issued his edict of expulsion, it is quite impossible to say. They were doubtless to be counted by thousands rather than by hundreds, though it appears to me that some modern estimates of their numbers are likely to be exaggerations.[5] The

[1] The suggestion that the Christus (*alias* Chrestus) of the story may have been an actual impostor posing as the promised Messiah (in Rome, of all places!) may be dismissed as too improbable for serious discussion. The opinion of Orosius is, of course, of no value, and ought to have no influence. He is a notorious elaborator of ecclesiastical myths, and he knew no more about the event than we do. His reference to a vanished passage of Josephus patently added nothing but the date to what he deduced from the single sentence in Suetonius. It is reasonable at best to suspect that he was quoting Josephus from memory, and quite erroneously.

[2] See my article on "The Expulsion of the Jews from Rome under Tiberius," in *Classical Philology*, xiv. 365-72.

[3] That by Claudius was not. Aquila and Priscilla, who were expelled with the rest, in (possibly) 52, were back again in Rome by 57 or 58, when St. Paul wrote his letter to the Roman Christians (cf. Rom. xvi. 3). I am, of course, quite well aware of the argument that Romans xvi. is not a part of the original letter, but am entirely unconvinced by it.

[4] Tacitus noted that the Jews were a prolific folk (*Hist.* v. 5).

[5] Jean Juster, for example (in his *Les Juifs dans l'empire romain*, vol. i. p. 209, n. 12) thinks there were as many Jews in Rome in the time of Claudius as in that of Tiberius, when they must have numbered at least fifty to sixty thousand; but his estimate appears to be based on a wrong interpretation of the word *iuuentus* in the account of the expulsion of the Jews from Rome under the earlier emperor; for *iuuentus* does not mean, as he translates it, "des jeunes gens," but men of age for military service (eighteen to forty-five years).

fact that they lived together in an exclusive colony would naturally tend, no less than their dress and their curious observances, to attract popular attention to them, when they might have been less the object of remark if scattered among the heterogeneous populace of the city's underworld. In this company of Jews it is altogether likely that some Christians were comprised; but there can be no reason to suppose that they formed a large group. They could at best have numbered only a minute proportion of the Jewish population, and if there were any non-Jews among the Christians, this number must have been so small as to be negligible. One may not perhaps safely argue that the small group of Christians in the midst of thousands of Jews would not be likely to be offensively aggressive, in the absence of any known leader of commanding position, like St. Paul.[1] The answer could too easily be made that some enthusiastic Christian now unknown might have arisen in even a small group, who was willing to throw discretion to the winds, and for the sake of the truth to precipitate the tumultuous disturbances that led to such serious consequences for Jew and Christian alike. But it may well be doubted whether the numerical proportion of Christians to Jews in Rome was not in all probability too small to make possible so violent a commotion as to call for such severe action from the government. Certainly there is no ground for supposing that Christians were any more numerous in Rome in proportion to the number of Jews there than they were in any other Jewish communities, and in these other places they were not yet imposing by numbers, so far as we can judge.

The second of the two considerations referred to above is perhaps the stronger. When St. Paul came

[1] The existence of a Christian Church in Rome of some years' standing does not appear to have attracted the attention of the leaders of the synagogue before the arrival of St. Paul in the capital.

to Rome as a prisoner (about A.D. 61), one of his first acts was to seek an interview with the leaders of the Jews. They assured him that they had heard from their brethren in Judaea nothing against him—apparently had heard nothing at all. Of Christianity they professed to know nothing more than that the Christian sect had a bad reputation throughout the East. They expressed a desire to hear the new doctrine expounded by St. Paul, and a time was set for their gratification.

Now this profession on their part of entire ignorance of Christianity except for a vague report of its unpopular character elsewhere might be set down as due in some measure to polite or politic reserve. There was certainly a Christian Church already established in Rome, and had been for some years. But the members thereof, doubtless mainly Jews at this time,[1] may have lived quietly, and even have attended to their synagogue duties, avoiding any contention with the straitly orthodox, and giving no occasion for active investigation and opposition. (Perhaps even their association was reckoned by the Jewish authorities as a synagogue congregation?) Moreover, amid the multitude of Jews in Rome the modesty of numbers and demeanour of the group of Christians may well have screened them from attention, whether hostile or curious or sympathetic. On the whole, the profession of ignorance on the part of the Jewish elders should be judged as being perfectly sincere, and no rhetorical camouflage, for which, indeed, no sufficient reason is apparent.

This conclusion is confirmed by observing their conduct. On the appointed day they came to St. Paul's lodging in great numbers, listened with most

[1] This statement, to be sure, contradicts a generally held belief, but despite the interpretation put upon certain passages in St. Paul's letter to the Roman Church, I am unable to believe that it had not been living very modestly up to the time of the apostle's arrival in the city, without engaging in active propaganda among either Jews or heathen; nor can I think that it would have had otherwise very considerable accessions of non-Jewish converts.

exemplary endurance to an all-day sermon, and discussed it with one another as if the doctrine were indeed a thing of which they had heard now for the first time.

But could there possibly have been this profession and this conduct, if only a few years earlier the Jewish colony in Rome had been so rent by bitter controversies between Jew and Christian, culminating in such widespread and persistent violence, that the civil power had been forced to intervene, and to secure municipal peace and order by expelling the whole, or at least a large part, of the Jewish and Christian population from the city? Under these circumstances would not the Jewish elders rather have told St. Paul bluntly, and perhaps offensively, that their own bitter experience had taught them quite enough about the Christian sect, and they did not desire further information? No other conclusion appears reasonable. I therefore think it incredible that the passage in Suetonius can have any reference to Christianity. It accordingly cannot furnish the slightest proof that there were any Christians in Rome in the time of Claudius, though one cannot rationally doubt that some must have drifted there by that time.[1]

But times were rapidly changing. The Orontes had begun to pour its flood into the Tiber, and Christianity was making progress in the Eastern world, and, one is justified in believing, also in the West.

[1] I am inclined to agree with the writers who would number among these Aquila and Priscilla. The author of the Acts is in the habit of mentioning by name the more prominent, whether for social position or for devotion, of the converts made by St. Paul as he proceeded on his preaching tours. Aquila and Priscilla were soon numbered among the apostle's dearest friends. Yet the narrator does not enumerate them among the Corinthian converts, though he does mention others by name, as he immediately before had specified some at Athens. He rather speaks of St. Paul's taking up residence with Aquila and Priscilla as if they were to be understood to be already Christians: the residence was continued (not begun) because they also were tent-makers. The writer does not definitely say that they were Christians; but it appears more likely that he might omit this statement, leaving it to be understood, than that he would omit to say that these persons, so prominent afterward in St. Paul's history, were, like the others mentioned, converted by his preaching at Corinth, had that been the case.

When St. Paul wrote his letter to the Christians in Rome (probably A.D. 57 or 58), he could send his salutations by name to twenty-six different persons, and could greet collectively a number of groups, and the Church that was holding its services in the house of Aquila and Priscilla.[1] As these two exiles had now returned to Rome, so had doubtless many others who had been expelled by Claudius. It is not necessary to suppose that St. Paul had personally met in the East all the Christians that he mentions in his peroration. Of course he may only have heard of them and of their zeal through the reports of the Roman Christians who, like Aquila and Priscilla, had swum into his ken. The persons mentioned probably formed no large majority of all the faithful in Rome, who may well have numbered at least a hundred or two.

Since the date of the letter to the Roman Christians several years had elapsed. St. Paul himself had been brought to Rome as a state prisoner, charged with capital crime.[2] But he had been permitted to live in quarters of his own, and to preach freely to all who chose to come to hear him. He was protected from possible Jewish molestation by his soldier-guard, and that was the only molestation that he had to fear. He enjoyed the goodwill of the higher military authorities in whose custody he was, and the civil power showed no disposition to interfere in the slightest degree with the freedom of Christian practice and propaganda. This condition of things lasted for at least two years. So much the writer of the Acts tells us. But he tells

[1] See p. 105, n. 2.

[2] It is improbable that the home government would pay any serious attention to the charges that really were at the basis of the Jewish prosecution, those of heresy and of sacrilege. But it would attend very seriously to such charges as *laesae maiestatis*, or incitement to riot, which were capital crimes. Yet the apparently favourable opinion of Festus regarding St. Paul's innocence would doubtless be communicated by him to Rome (cf. Acts xxv. 25-6; xxvi. 31), and would be of great influence in procuring his ultimate acquittal, if, indeed, he ever was set at liberty, even for a season.

us no more. His account closes with that statement. We do not know what was the history of the apostle in the interval between the end of this peaceful two years and the time a few months later when Rome blazed up in a tempest of flame, and the thunderbolt of Nero's pretended vengeance fell in the midst of the trembling flock. But during the two years of quiet it is impossible to believe that St. Paul's preaching had not added many to the Church. If the Christians in Rome numbered one or two hundreds in 58, they probably numbered several times as many in 64. They certainly were numerous enough so that the *multitudo ingens* of the *Annals*, properly understood, could be found and massacred, and yet leave hundreds to water and nourish the seed that the martyrs had planted in their blood.

But even if it be conceded that there were enough Christians in Rome in A.D. 64 to furnish the *multitudo ingens* of victims, there still remains the question whether they were prominent enough at that place and time as a distinct sect to be picked out as persons against whom the flood of popular suspicion that threatened Nero could plausibly be diverted by trumped-up accusations. It has been suggested with some reason that they could hardly yet have gained among the upper classes even the recognition of their corporate or individual existence, but that, on the other hand, if an organised body of persons of general ill-repute was needed as a stalking-horse, the Jews would naturally have been selected as meeting the requirement in every particular. Tacitus himself does not imply that the Christians were unfavourably known to the Romans of higher position: he much more distinctly implies, by feeling it necessary to explain their origin and characteristics, that the class from which his readers would be drawn might be expected, even in his day, fifty years later, to have no especial knowledge of the sect. But he does say that

the common people hated them for their enormities,[1] and knew them as "Christians." His account also clearly shows that the government was not able to identify easily any considerable number of Christians for arrest. They had to be searched out by questioning (probably under torture) a few who were first seized and examined.[2]

But why were they rather than the Jews selected as suitable victims, in spite of the preliminary lack of familiarity of the government with the existence of Christians? Gibbon's suggestion has been elaborated reasonably by later writers.[3] The Jews were indeed unpopular in the Rome of Nero's time,[4] and their unpopularity appears to have been on the increase from the beginning to the end of the first century after Christ. But they were in high favour with the empress Poppaea, then at the height of her influence with Nero. On this point we have the testimony of Josephus, who narrates two occasions on which indulgences were procured for the Jews through the intercession of Poppaea, to whom Josephus in the latter of the two cases had been introduced by a certain Aliturus, a Jew by birth, but a play-actor much esteemed by the emperor.[5] Josephus even calls

[1] There is, of course, the possibility that in this phrase we have a Tacitean exaggeration, or a transfer of characterisation from Tacitus' own time to that of Nero.

[2] The legal process was, of course, that of the *cognitio*, under Nero's direction and instruction. The accused might be found guilty on any evidence that pleased the presiding magistrate.

[3] Gibbon also suggested that the victims might have been not Christians at all, but members of a group of fanatically patriotic and revolutionary Jews, followers of one Judas, whose career is described amply by Josephus, and who appears to be mentioned as a Galilean in Acts v. 37. Josephus calls him a Gaulanite, but more frequently refers to him as a Galilean. Gibbon imagined accordingly that his followers might also have been known as Galileans, and thus have been confused by Roman writers with the Christians, who bore the same appellation. But there is not the slightest indication anywhere that these Jewish zealots were ever as a class called Galileans; and it is extremely improbable that any of them were to be found in Rome, or that the followers of Christ had ever been called Galileans outside of Judaea, or that either Tacitus or his authorities would anywhere or at any time have found that local name applied to Christians.

[4] Cf. Lucan ii. 592; Plin. *N.H.* xiii. 46; xxx. 11; Sen. ap. Augustin. *Ciu. Dei* vi. 11; Pers. 5. 179-84.

[5] Cf. Ios. *Ant.* xx. 8. 11; *Vit.* 3.

Poppaea θεοσεβής, which ought to mean that she was actually a Jewish proselyte, but in that looser connection of those who were not held to all the ceremonial observances of the Mosaic law. It is certainly reasonable to suppose that if any blow was likely to fall upon the Jews at Rome (and Poppaea would have been likely to be aware of such a thing in advance), it might have been averted through her influence on her husband. The easiest way to assure this protection from Nero would obviously be to suggest some other company of unpopular persons as equally or more suitable objects of his simulated wrath. The Jews, through Poppaea, would naturally point out the Christians, the growth of whose Church through the active missionary work of St. Paul in the city could not have failed to quicken the animosity of the leaders of the synagogue. This would be quite in accord with the fierce hostility of Jew against Christian recorded in other cities of the empire.

But it has also been suggested, apparently in the way of agreeable compromise, that both Jews and Christians were involved in the charges and condemnations, but that in some mysterious fashion the memory of Christian suffering was perpetuated, while that of the Jews passed into speedy oblivion.[1] All mention of Jews might indeed drop out of Christian tradition (if such tradition existed), but in pagan tradition, represented by Tacitus and Suetonius, precisely the reverse would under the postulated circumstances take place. The less-known Christians would tend to disappear, and the well-known Jews remain in possession of the field. This would by itself be sufficient answer to the suggestion just mentioned. But another answer may also be made. Against the supposition it is enough to cite the silence of the

[1] The pseudo-correspondence of Seneca with St. Paul (*Ep.* 12) says that Jews and Christians were burned alive as guilty of the Fire. The testimony is, of course, of no value on this point; but see further p. 123, n. 1.

contemporary Josephus. He declares (*Ant.* xx. 8. 3) that he intends in discussing the reign of Nero to touch but lightly upon matters that only remotely concern the history of the Jews, but to relate with great accuracy whatever calamities happened to them, or of whatever crimes they were guilty. He accordingly does not mention the Great Fire; but it would be inconceivable that he should omit all reference to it and to the following prosecutions, if he believed that they in any way touched the Jews; and his knowledge on that point cannot have been defective. Yet there is no mention of any such persecution of his brethren of the Jewish faith.

We may therefore conclude (if indeed the reader has survived thus far the laborious discussion) that the account of the Neronian persecution found in the *Annals* of Tacitus is authentic, and though possibly in some degree rhetorically elaborated, in every essential aspect trustworthy. But before proceeding to the discussion of certain other matters of interest in connection therewith, it will be convenient to examine the testimony of Christian writers to the same episode. Their statements connecting the death of Sts. Peter and Paul with the action of Nero will, however, so far as possible, be reserved for treatment in a later chapter.

It has been supposed that the portrayal of the sufferings of Christians in the First Epistle of St. Peter has reference to an extension into the eastern provinces of the persecution instituted by Nero in Rome. The precise chronological assignment is made to rest most strongly upon one single word in the letter. The Christians of Asia Minor are urged by the apostle not to think it a strange thing that they are being subjected to a fiery trial (πύρωσις), since it is for their testing (πειρασμός). The word πύρωσις means literally "a burning"; some of Nero's victims were burned; therefore it was manifest to the proponents of the theory

just mentioned that the burning of Christians was being carried on in the provinces after the fashion recently initiated at Rome. This theory was helped out by the belief that the apostle was writing from Rome itself, and at a time not long after the events chronicled by Tacitus. But I have already pointed out [1] that to those not obsessed by a theory, and not devoted to the elucidation of proof-texts and proof-words unhampered by their context, the epistle of St. Peter shows no indication whatever that the Asiatic Christians were suffering martyrdom to the extreme of death. Indeed, the testing, to the patient endurance of which in humility and innocency of life the apostle urges them, would seem to be more efficiently directed, if it had reference to the shaping of character and the confirming of blamelessness in this life, rather than to the bearing of witness by meeting death courageously. Πύρωσις (which the Vulgate renders by *feruor* and Tertullian *Adu. Gnost.* 12 by *ustio*) is doubtless used here, as not infrequently in pagan Greek authors, in a figurative sense.[2] The First Epistle of St. Peter surely contains no allusion to the persecution by Nero, and in adopting this conclusion we may avoid all vexed questions about the date of the letter, or the place of its writing.[3]

Nor does the Epistle to the Hebrews, sometimes cited in the same cause, contain the slightest allusion to the Neronian or to any other systematic and official persecution. The state of things depicted precisely agrees with that set forth in 1 Peter. Christians are suffering from reproach and slander, and even from robbery or destruction of property (x. 32-34). Some of them have even surrendered their faith, presumably under this pressure (vi. 4-8). Against such apostasy the faithful are solemnly warned (x. 19-31), and

[1] See pp. 60 ff.

[2] Compare the "refiner's fire" of Prov. xxvii. 21 and Mal. iii. 2; and in this very epistle, i. 7.

[3] But see on this, pp. 278 ff.

exhorted to follow the example in patient endurance of the ancient fathers and prophets, and of Jesus Christ himself. They are to regard their sufferings as a discipline to fit them the better for the glory that is to come (xi., xii.). One sentence in the letter is of especial significance for our purpose. These Hebrew Christians " have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin " (xii. 4). They have not been called upon, as Christ was (xii. 2), and as many earlier men had been (xi. 32-40), to lay down their lives in the conflict. We are not justified in reading here an intimation by contrast that others of their generation had thus been martyred, though doubtless this was true. But the writer of the epistle merely emphasises the lightness of the disciplinary chastisement of the persons addressed, in their present condition, which they might think a grievous one.

But it has been confidently claimed that the Revelation of St. John the Divine distinctly refers to Nero and to the martyrs of his reign. Here the classicist must tread warily, and may even hold himself excused from venturing at all. I have elsewhere affirmed that fervid apocalyptic utterances, of possibly uncertain date and necessarily dubitable interpretation, are very poor material on which to build a historical structure. The Revelation is not history; it is not even plain prose; it is impassioned poetry of an orgiastic character, bursting the shackles of coherent expression, disregarding the *μηδὲν ἄγαν* of restrained and intelligible imagery, flashing prodigious and grotesque creations before the eyes like distorted and quickly changing kaleidoscopic visions, or rather, like the instantaneous glimpses of terrific mountain-peaks confusedly seen in ever varying but always frightful forms under the blinding illumination of crashing levin-bolts. It doubtless sometimes has reference to facts; but it mixes fact and the exuberance of dramatic fancy in such wise as to bewilder and defy the plodding

historical critic. It has no inspired and infallible interpreter. If the dismayed classicist gives up all attempt to base an argument on the Revelation, he may be justified in ignoring the uncertain attempts of others in the same direction. But he may be permitted to suggest with all due humility and hesitation that the political and religious conditions that appear to be confusedly and exaggeratedly imaged in the apocalyptic utterances seem to accommodate themselves more readily to Domitian's reign than to an earlier or a considerably later period. The strange mythological monster may just as well, or better, be a generalised picture of the emperor instead of a portrait of any particular one. Certainly the apparent number of the martyred throng may be regarded as a permissible poetic exaggeration, not to be taken into serious consideration as a piece of historical evidence, otherwise than of the fact that Christians had suffered persecution. But isolated and sporadic cases of persecution, such as probably were taking place in every decade (cf. p. 50), would by their cumulative effect upon the Christian consciousness abundantly account for all the references to martyrdoms in the Book of Revelation.

If the Scarlet Woman (Rev. xvii. 3), who was "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (Rev. xvii. 6), is indeed Rome, and if Babylon the Great (Rev. xviii. 2 ff.), in whom "was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth" (Rev. xviii. 24), is also Rome, they certainly are not the city of Rome pure and simple, but the Roman power, which radiates from that local centre and holds sway through all the earth. It appears quite unreasonable to suppose, even with the great authority of Mommsen behind us, that we have here a reference to many martyrdoms in the very city of Rome, and hence to the Neronian persecution, or to the putative bringing of many condemned Christians from regions abroad

to the capital, to win there the crown of martyrdom. Wherever the Roman power extends, there is the apocalypt's Rome. Having ventured thus far, I will even venture farther. If Scarlet Woman and Babylon are both figures of the pagan Roman civil power, so may be also the Beast and his image. The worship demanded by him or for his image is then the obedience to man rather than to God, and this perversion of due allegiance is naturally characterised as idolatry. It is not necessary to suppose that we have here a specific reference to emperor-worship, though that interpretation is certainly attractive as against any other.

It was formerly the fashion to read in the so-called *First Epistle of Clement* certain statements as referring to the Neronian persecution in the city of Rome, and the document itself was for this as well as other reasons ascribed to that period. Later critics have found it possible to assign the epistle to the reign of Domitian, while yet holding that certain references in it are to the Neronian proceedings.[1] If we may leave the well-known reference of Clement to the death of Sts. Peter and Paul for the moment out of the question, the only statement in the letter about a persecution is (in chapter vi.) that "to these men of holy conversation [*i.e.* Peter and Paul] were joined a great company of the elect, who, suffering through jealousy many indignities and afflictions, furnished among us the most splendid example. Through jealousy women were persecuted, enduring as Danaids and Dirces[2]

[1] The present writer's views on the date and circumstances of the letter of Clement, as well as of the *Shepherd* of Hermas (which is intimately bound up with the former work), are sufficiently outlined in Chapter IX. of this volume.

[2] The text as here followed is generally thought to be corrupt. Dirce, who was punished by being dragged to death by a wild bull, might have furnished the type for the theatrically contrived execution of a Christian woman; but the current story of the punishment in the underworld of the daughters of Danaus contains no elements of similar adaptability. The best emendation yet offered, however unsatisfactory, is perhaps that of Wordsworth, who as far back as 1844 suggested γυναῖκες, νεάνιδες, παιδίσκαι for the MSS. γυναῖκες δαναΐδες καὶ δίρκαι, thus understanding "women, young maidens, slave-girls." But perhaps no emendation at all

terrible and vile indignities. Though weak in body, they pursued the steadfast course of the faith, and received a noble reward."

This account has commonly been taken as an indubitable reference to the episode of the Neronian persecution, either because (in earlier days) 1 *Clement* was believed to have been written soon after that event, or at least because this passage follows close upon the mention of the two great apostles, who (so it is claimed) were already understood to have suffered death at Rome under Nero in the same persecution. But in the first place, as will be pointed out in a later chapter, there is no reason to believe that the writer of 1 *Clement* had any specific information about the time or place of the death of the apostles, or intended to ascribe it to Nero. And again, in the way in which he runs down through the long list of those who had suffered through jealousy, beginning with Abel, continuing through David, and then dropping down at once to modern times, there is nothing to indicate that he did not think of the great number of those who were joined to the apostles as suffering rather after them than with them in point of time—with them only as being united to them in the same Christian faith, and so far forth suffering in the same cause. This is indeed the more natural supposition. The general impression of the Christian Church about persecution, formed on the basis of striking though occasional and somewhat isolated instances, would be quite enough to account for his emotional expression. It will be noticed that he says nothing of such spectacular burnings as appealed to Tacitus. If 1 *Clement* is not to have a date assigned that closely follows that of the Neronian persecution, we may safely conclude that its mention

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is necessary. The best MSS. of Tertullian (*Apol.* 21) give the form *Danais* for the familiar *Danae*, and Danae may similarly be the mythological person meant by Clement. Her story might furnish a suggestion for devising "terrible and vile indignities," where that of the Danaids would not.

of tortures was not derived from any account or tradition specifically of that episode. The epistle is especially rich in clear echoes of the Epistle to the Hebrews, with which the author of 1 *Clement* must have been very well acquainted. If the reference to "Danaids and Dirces" is due merely to a text-corruption, and perhaps even if it be allowed to stand, we might almost be justified in thinking that in the account of the persecutions the author was chiefly, if not merely, elaborating the statement in Heb. xi. 33-38.

In his *Shepherd*, which was apparently published somewhere about A.D. 140, Hermas speaks several times about a great persecution to come,[1] and once[2] substantially copies the well-known passage from 1 Peter iv. 13, 15, 16, in which passage, by the way, Hermas does not appear to recognise any reference to a serious persecution. Only three times does he mention any past persecution:[3] "those who have already been well-pleasing to God in their sufferings on account of the name. . . . 'What,' said I, 'did they endure?' 'Listen,' she said; 'stripes, prisons, great afflictions, crosses, wild beasts, on account of the name.'" In this brief statement, and in its setting, there is nothing to remind one specifically of the Neronian persecution as against sporadic and isolated acts, and with that we may for the present leave it. The other two references are to "the double-minded, [who] whenever they hear of affliction, through their cowardice commit idolatry, and are ashamed of the name of their Lord"; and to those who, "being brought under authority and examined did not deny, but suffered gladly." Here also there is no reason to suppose a reference to the persecution under Nero, rather than to occasional cases of suffering before the courts for righteousness' sake.

Of Melito, Bishop of Sardis apparently in the third

[1] *Vis.* ii. 2. 7; 3. 3; iv. 1. 1; 2. 5; 3. 6. [2] *Sim.* ix. 28. 5.
[3] *Vis.* iii. 1. 9; 2. 1; *Sim.* ix. 21. 3; 28. 4.

quarter of the second century after Christ, we should know very little, were it not for Eusebius, who gives us in his *Church History* a statement of Melito's name and office with a list of his published works and certain quotations from them.[1] Melito addressed to the emperor Marcus Aurelius a defence of Christianity. In it he averred that the Christian Church had flourished without molestation by any of the emperors, except that "Nero and Domitian, misled by certain malignant persons, were disposed to exhibit enmity toward [or, to bring false accusations against] the doctrine held among us."[2] This, written probably more than one hundred years after the event, is the first plain Christian reference to what we may judge to be the persecution by Nero. The Bishop of Sardis may have had only vague knowledge about the matter (no detailed oral or written tradition concerning it should be assumed to have existed in his time), or he may have toned down the expression somewhat in order not to make too prominent imperial precedents unfavourable to Christianity. I am myself inclined to the former opinion, believing it probable that he thought St. Paul (and possibly also St. Peter) suffered death under Nero, but had no other definite idea on the matter. As regards St. Paul, this might have been gathered from the books of what is now called the New Testament, aided by a little knowledge of civil chronology. Possibly also a (mistaken) interpretation of the sentences in 1 *Clement* concerning the two apostles aided the conception. As regards St. Peter, Melito may have connected his death with

[1] The fragments of Melito's writings extant in Greek are collected by Migne in the fifth volume of his *Patrologia Graeca*, and in E. J. Goodspeed's *Die ältesten Apologeten*, as well as elsewhere. Works regarding him (except those issued in recent years) are indexed by U. Chevalier in his *Bio-Bibliographie*; see also the *Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte*, Erster Teil, "Das Altertum," by Preuschen-Krueger (1911).

[2] Eus. *H.E.* iv. 26 (190) *μόνοι πάντων, ἀναπεισθέντες ὑπό τινων βασκάνων ἀνθρώπων, τὸν καθ' ἡμᾶς ἐν διαβολῇ καταστῆσαι λόγον ἠθέλησαν Νέρων καὶ Δομετιανός.*

that of St. Paul through the same influence (taking "Babylon" in 1 Peter to mean Rome); but probably the legend which I think was first invented and set afloat by Hegesippus had already reached his ears. It is not impossible also that he was acquainted with the brief statement about Christians in Suetonius, but probably, as a Greek-speaking person, only at second hand, if at all.

The next extant Christian writer to mention the Neronian persecution is the great Tertullian. With him we reach the end of the second century and begin on the third. Tertullian knew something of the *Histories* of Tacitus.[1] But he very evidently was not acquainted with the *Annals*. Otherwise he would certainly have flooded us with gorgeous rhetoric about Nero's persecution of Christians. He also had read (perhaps while resident in Rome) the *Lives* of Suetonius.[2] That work only he chooses to cite as authority for his own statement that Nero was the first of the emperors to persecute Christians. But he probably had read this also in Melito, or in Hegesippus, or in both writers (perhaps also in Iulius Africanus?); for immediately below, when he speaks of Domitian as a persecutor, he apparently can be following only Melito (or also Hegesippus). There is nothing in the life of Domitian by Suetonius to suggest it,[3] but Melito mentions Nero and Domitian in the same clause.

But even with the help of Suetonius added to the vague assistance of Christian writers, Tertullian can furnish no more than the simple statement that Nero

[1] Cf. *Apol.* 16, where he quotes from Tac. *Hist.* v. by author, title of work, and number of book: the passage is duplicated in *Ad Nat.* i. 11.

[2] Cf. *De Anima* 44, where he quotes Suetonius by name (*Nero* 46) on Nero's dreaming: *Scorp.* 15 *uitas Caesarum legimus; orientem fidem Romae primus Nero cruentauit* (Suet. *Nero* 16. 2): *Apol.* 5 *consulite commentarios* [*i.e.* "histories"] *uestros; illic reperietis primum Neronem in hanc sectam cum maxime orientem Caesariano gladio ferocisse.*

[3] See below, pp. 155 ff., in the chapter on the alleged persecution of Christians by Domitian.

was the first imperial persecutor. He does not mention the Great Fire, because Suetonius assigns that and the persecution to different categories of anecdote. He is certain that Sts. Peter and Paul suffered death as martyrs under Nero at Rome, and apparently infers that it was in the course of this persecution.[1] The kernel of this statement, though probably not all of its wrappings, Tertullian of course derived from his Christian predecessors: but this matter is reserved for later discussion.

From Tertullian we may make a leap over two full centuries down to Sulpicius Seuerus. No one of the intervening writers knows anything more about the persecution than did Tertullian. Even Eusebius depends upon and quotes Tertullian in this matter, though he has happily preserved for us also the brief mention by Melito. Origen's additional item about the manner of St. Peter's death will come up in a later chapter. But Sulpicius has much more to say. He nowhere mentions Tacitus as a source, but two of his paragraphs on the reign of Nero show by their precise verbal agreement with the corresponding passages in the *Annals* that he had that work before him. Thus in *Chron.* ii. 28. 2 he conforms his statements unmistakably to the wording of Tac. *Ann.* xv. 37; and in *Chron.* ii. 29 he describes the Great Fire in Rome, connects the subsequent persecution with it (as does no previous Christian writer), and gives details of the punishments not merely after the manner but in the very phrases of Tacitus.[2] This, about three centuries

[1] V. *Scorp.* 15 *orientem fidem Romae primus Nero cruentauit: tunc Petrus ab altero cingitur, cum cruci adstringitur: tunc Paulus ciuitatis Romanae consequitur natiuitatem, cum illic martyrii renascitur generositate.* Cf. also *De Praescr. Heret.* 36.

[2] Sulp. Seu. *Chron.* ii. 29. 1-3 *interea abundante iam Christianorum multitudine accidit ut Roma incendio conflagraret, Nerone apud Antium constituto. sed opinio omnium inuidiam incendii in principem retorquebat, credebaturque imperator gloriam innouandae urbis quaesisse. neque ulla re Nero efficiebat quin ab eo iussum incendium putaretur. igitur uertit inuidiam in Christianos, actaeque in innoxios crudelissimae quaestiones. quin et nouae mortes excogitatae, ut ferarum tergis contecti laniatu canum interirent, multi crucibus affixi aut flamma usti, plerique in id reseruati, ut cum defecisset dies, in usum nocturni luminis urerentur. hoc initio in Christianos saeuiri coeptum. post*

after the composition of the *Annals*, is the earliest reference to that work in any extant writer,[1] and in this the chronographer does not deign to mention either the name of the author or the title of his work.

It should be noted that when Sulpicius remarks that "in later times (*post*) also laws were made proscribing the religion, and by published edicts it was not permitted to be a Christian," he is not referring to any time in Nero's reign, but is interpolating a parenthetical statement based, though not very exactly, on the utterances of Tertullian relating to the state of things in the late second century. To the earlier date he returns in his immediately following sentence, "Then [*tum*, that is, in Nero's persecution] Paul and Peter were condemned to death, of whom the one was beheaded with the sword, Peter hanged on the cross." *Tum* stands thus in a sort of resumptive contrast to the preceding *post*.

Orosius, whose *Histories against the Pagans* served Christian writers of the middle ages as their chief manual of ancient history, was apparently a much

etiam datis legibus religio uetabatur, palamque edictis propositis Christianum esse non licebat. tum Paulus ac Petrus capitis damnati, quorum uni ceruix gladio desecta, Petrus in crucem sublatus est.

[1] Jerome nearly touched the point when, in his *Commentary on Zechariah*, iii. 14 (Migne PL xxv. 1522), he says that Cornelius Tacitus wrote in thirty books the lives of the emperors succeeding Augustus down to and including Domitian. The *Histories* had apparently never been lost to sight; but it may be conjectured that only now had come to the knowledge of scholars an edition of the works of Tacitus in which *Annals* and *Histories*, covering as they did a continuous period, were combined in that order into a single series of books. This editing may have been due to the directions of the Emperor Tacitus referred to elsewhere. It should also be mentioned that in the forged correspondence between Seneca and St. Paul there occurs in *Ep.* 12, which speaks of the Great Fire, the statement that Jews and Christians are being burned alive as guilty of the Fire (*Christiani et Iudaei quasi machinatores incendii affecti supplicio uri solent*). This correspondence was known to St. Jerome, and is said by him to be widely read (*De Vir. Ill.* 12). St. Augustine echoes his statement (*Ep.* 153. 14 *ad Maced.*). But the remark about the executions could not have been written before the reappearance of the *Annals* of Tacitus—probably not before the publication of the *Chronica* of Sulpicius Seuerus. Therefore *Ep.* 12, which also varies in position in the MS. tradition, was probably a later addition, and by another hand, to the original group of falsifications. If this be judged not true, then we are involved in difficulties about relative dates. For St. Jerome's statement implies that the correspondence had been extant for some time, and yet it is very improbable that the forger, in connecting the persecution directly with the Fire, could have been following Tacitus himself instead of Sulpicius Seuerus.

younger contemporary of Sulpicius. In his account of Nero's reign he plainly rests back upon Suetonius, and shows no acquaintance with either the *Annals* of Tacitus or the *Chronica* of Sulpicius. Possible inferences regarding the relative order of publication of the works of Sulpicius and Orosius are not of necessary interest for the present discussion. Orosius describes the Great Fire mainly in the terms of Suetonius.[1] Like Suetonius he also does not connect causally the Fire with the persecution, but remarks upon it, "This mass of crime [*i.e.* various enormities of Nero that Orosius has just been recounting] he increased by daring impiety against God: for he was the first to visit punishments and death upon Christians at Rome, and he ordered them to be tortured with similar persecution throughout all the provinces; and in his attempt to root out the very name he slew the blessed apostles of Christ, Peter with the cross, Paul with the sword." [2]

If we disregard the misinterpreted and sometimes misdated allusions of 1 Peter and the Johannine Apocalypse, this, in the fifth century, is the first reference in all antiquity to the persecution of Nero as extending beyond the confines of Rome, nor is there any of independent source later than this. The silence of all previous extant writers on a subject in which they would have had so keen an interest, and concerning which Orosius could have had no further knowledge than was contained in their works, is significant. Furthermore, Nero had no grudge or sentiment against Christianity. These sectaries in his city of Rome, when he learned about them, furnished him conveniently with suitable victims of his trumped-up charges of arson. That was all. When the bloody

[1] Oros. vii. 7. 4-8.

[2] *Oros.* vii. 7. 10 *auxit hanc molem facinorum eius temeritas impietatis in Deum: nam primus Romae Christianos suppliciis et mortibus affecit, ac per omnes prouincias pari persecutione excruciari imperauit, ipsumque nomen exstirpare conatus beatissimos Christi apostolos Petrum cruce Paulum gladio occidit.*

local drama was over, he very evidently had no further concern about the religion. The statement of Orosius that he tried to extirpate it throughout all the provinces is on a par with his statement that Nero tried to extirpate it at Rome. He evidently did nothing of the sort at Rome, and with regard to the rest of the Roman world we may with all confidence set down the statement as another one of those gross and baseless rhetorical exaggerations in which the pious soul of Orosius delighted. He is no worse in this respect than some of his credulous modern successors.

This is the end of all Christian testimony or pseudo-testimony concerning the persecution by Nero; for mediaeval repetitions need not be noticed. The reader, if unaccustomed to the impartial and critical study of early Church history, will probably be much surprised to find it so slight. If he is among the number of those who have believed in the existence of oral historical traditions and written archives in the earliest days of the Church, he will probably be doubly surprised. For here is no trace of early Christian tradition, whether oral or written, other than the vague reference to St. Paul and St. Peter, which assumes greater definition as we come down the years of the second century (see what is said on p. 20 concerning the manner of the growth of myth as against the characteristics of real historical tradition).[1] Melito (and perhaps also Hegesippus) possibly, Tertullian certainly, in other respects followed Suetonius. Later writers directly or indirectly followed Tertullian or Suetonius, except that Sulpicius Seuerus had the *Annals* of Tacitus as his main authority. Evidently we must go back to Tacitus alone for the suggestion of such other subsidiary questions as still await our discussion.

[1] Under the most favourable circumstances it would not be strange that later Christian tradition (had any existed) should embody no recollection of the Fire. The fact of the persecution rather than the accidental reason for it might be expected to survive in Christian report as the important thing.

Of what were the Christians accused? Evidently of arson. Those who think otherwise read their Tacitus in the light of their Tertullian, and interpret Roman procedure from their knowledge of modern legal tribunals. There was a widespread suspicion that the Fire was due to Nero himself. The emperor wished to divert this. How could he do it most effectively? Manifestly by producing other persons who could be convicted of the arson before the court, and in whose guilt the commonalty might be readily disposed or persuaded to believe. If the people might also be entertained by the bloody drama of the executions, so much the better for the general effect on the desired restoration of the emperor's popularity. He did not care merely to provide the people with amusement, or to attract their minds to other things. That would have been but a weak and temporary expedient. He would not be so much of a fool as to be content with this. He wished to produce before the people the persons actually guilty (at least, legally found guilty) of the act which had cast suspicion on himself. But if the direct charge were not to be arson, but merely the profession of Christianity, or "hatred of humanity," his desired end could surely not be attained. The primary charge before his court must certainly have been arson.

When Tacitus says that the defendants were convicted not so much on the charge of arson as because of their hatred of humanity,[1] he certainly does not mean to affirm that the legal charge was not of arson, but merely that the reason why these especial people were picked out as plausible victims of that false accusation[2] was that, being Christians, they were

[1] *Ann.* xv. 44 *haud perinde in crimine incendii quam odio humani generis conuicti sunt.*

[2] Tacitus has already signified without equivocation that the accusation was false; for in the sentence with which he opens his description of the Fire he remarks of it, "whether due to accident or to the emperor's craft is uncertain, for each conclusion has authorities to support it (*forte an dolo principis incertum, nam utrumque auctores prodidere*)." According to this putting as of the only possible alternatives,

believed to be, in general, enemies of humankind,[1] and the people would therefore be disposed to accept readily the verdict that they were the incendiaries. It was really, therefore, their bad reputation in general that brought them to their death.

The trials were, of course, a legal farce. The cases were probably conducted, as before remarked, by *cognitio* under the presidency of Nero's own appointee and ready tool, the *praefectus urbi*.[2] Condemnation was predetermined. The only thing necessary was to find a sufficient number of Christians for the play. Some were easily discovered. They were put on trial,[3] and being in all probability from the lower ranks of society (as, together with other things, the forms of their ultimate punishment indicate), they were doubtless examined under torture. "They pleaded guilty," writes Tacitus, "and through information furnished by them a large number were condemned."

The sentence that describes the trial, the confession, and the condemnation (*igitur primum correpti, qui fatebantur, deinde indicio eorum multitudo . . . conuicti sunt*) has by its manifest difficulties given rise to several different interpretations. But to the present writer two or three things about it appear to be assured. *Correpti* signifies both arrest and trial, taken together

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the Christians certainly were not believed by him (nor apparently by any of the writers who preceded him in their accounts of the event) to have been guilty of the arson. The phrase *Nero subdidit reos* (ch. 44) clearly looks, of course, in the same direction.

[1] *Odium generis humani* is merely a phrase of general objurgation. It had no specific meaning otherwise than as expressing lively detestation of the persons charged with it. The contemporary Pliny calls Nero himself *hostis generis humani* (*N.H.* vii. 46), *fax generis humani* (*N.H.* vii. 45), *uenenum terris* (*N.H.* xxii. 92), all terms of similar import. By Tertullian's time *hostis publicus* or *hostis humani generis* indicated an upsetter of social and political traditions; a citizen evidently disaffected toward State and society; one guilty, therefore, of constructive treason (see the citations in the notes on p. 78). On the senate's formal condemnation of Nero as *hostis* see p. 138 and note.

[2] On the procedure in the *cognitio*, see p. 71.

[3] *Correpti*. The verb is frequently used by Tacitus (cf. Gerber and Greef's *Lexicon Taciteum*) in the sense not merely of arrest but of arrest and the legal process following upon it. There appears to be usually a connotation of injustice connected with it, along with that of sudden and violent action: cf. our "haled into court."

as a single concept. The betrayal of others (*indicio*) must have been connected with the examination and the elicited confession (whatever that was) in the course of the trial. The confession accordingly followed the arraignment, and did not precede it; it was therefore not a mere confession of holding the Christian faith, for Tacitus surely appears to indicate that the first arrests were made of persons popularly known to be Christians, of whose membership therefore the authorities would not need to be further assured; nor did Roman procedure require, as modern might, a special constatation of this fact in open court, for the sake of record. The clause *qui fatebantur* is therefore not the grammatical subject of *correpti* [*sunt*], but is merely continuative of the narrative.[1] Yet for perfect clearness we certainly do desiderate *nonnulli*, or the like, between *igitur* and *primum*, instead of the vague reference back to *Christiani* in the preceding sentences; yet it is perhaps no more needed than *ii* in the same place, if *qui fatebantur* were to be taken as the subject of *correpti* [*sunt*].

But to what did the culprits plead guilty? Naturally first of all to the specific charge brought against them, that of arson. There is no reason for believing that all pleaded guilty. Some may well have held out, even against torture, but no limitation of number would get into the emperor's published statement. There is no difficulty in believing that some, at least, may have confessed that they were guilty of a crime that they had not committed. Some of them may even under such pressure have confessed what the court, with its ultimate purpose in view, would naturally try to extort from them, that the Christian community had conspired to produce the Fire. This appears to be the most probable explanation of the

[1] Like, *e.g.*, the *qui*-clause in Cic. *Fam.* xv. 4. 8 *plerosque necopinantes oppressimus, qui occisi captique sunt*: that is, "we caught the most of them off their guard; these were either killed or made prisoners."

case. At any rate, their "confession" was twisted by the adroitness of the court into that meaning.

That was enough. The rest was now plain sailing. This "confession" in open court would convince the populace that the generally detested sect was as a body guilty of the fire that had stripped so many thousands of home and possessions, and made them vagabonds and beggars. From this point on in the investigation it would be legally necessary only to convict a man of being a Christian. Condemnation to death for conspiracy to commit the arson would immediately follow.[1] It remained merely to discover more Christians, in order to produce a sufficiently imposing array of victims. This was readily done through the information elicited from some of the first group of prisoners, who very likely did not realise that, in answering the presumably skilful questions addressed to them, they were infallibly bringing death to their friends and brethren.

Nero's diabolical scheme appears to have been at first eminently successful. The people were predisposed to believe the Christians malefactors. The confession in open court, knowledge of which was of course sedulously disseminated, convinced them that the Christians had set the city on fire. That is plain from the words of Tacitus, who says the people looked upon them as guilty and deserving the extreme penalty of the law.[2] But nevertheless the studied cruelty of the emperor overreached itself. The populace was shocked by the manner of the executions, instead of amused; and although the historian does

[1] On individual responsibility for an alleged corporate crime or conspiracy to commit crime see p. 65.

[2] *Quamquam aduersus sontes et nouissima exempla meritos.* The phrase *quamquam . . . sontes* certainly means not "guilty though they might be," but "guilty though they were." And it certainly can have no reference to the *odium humani generis* (to which also *sontes* would hardly apply), but to the immediate and definite crime now under expiation. Of this Tacitus has already indicated his own certain conviction that the Christians were innocent; it only remains that the people had believed them guilty of it.

not say that in the revulsion of feeling they changed their minds about the guilt of the sufferers, and reverted to their former suspicions about the emperor, he does definitely say that they did not believe the emperor to have been single-minded in the matter. One may easily see how earlier as well as later writers than Tacitus bluntly charged the crime upon Nero. Tacitus represents Subrius Flauus as taunting Nero to his face with being an incendiary as well as a murderer of mother and wife, a jockey, and a play-actor (*Ann.* xv. 67).

CHAPTER V

THE "INSTITVTVM NERONIANVM"

We have thus finished with the discussion of the persecution by Nero in its immediate aspects, but there yet remains an important corollary for our consideration. It has been held, naturally by those who believe (contrary to what has been set forth in the preceding chapter) that Christians were condemned by Nero not at all on any formal charge of arson, but solely and literally as "enemies of humanity," that his action established a legal principle of procedure against Christianity and its adherents, which was recognised and followed thereafter by the Roman state and its officials. Christians were thenceforth nothing but "outlaws," "brigands," to be "hunted down like wild beasts," whenever any competent magistrate chose to proceed against them. From Nero's time forward, then, the profession of Christianity was in itself a crime that at once set the professor outside the pale of the law altogether, and made it unnecessary for the prosecutor to allege any other fault against him than that he was a Christian.

To this all-sweeping proposition its adherents are led, I suspect, by more than one consideration. In the first place, they cannot but concede that within the first two centuries of the Christian era (to which period alone these essays on the persecutions are confined) there is no trace of any formal legislation directed against Christianity. Yet there was more

or less persecution of Christians going on all through this time, and the Christians (at least in the second century) persistently affirm that they are made to suffer not on account of any crime actually committed (or charged? that is more doubtful), but "for the name." The advocates aforesaid believe this to be literally true, and to have been exemplified in the Neronian persecution (some, however, date it from Vespasian's or Domitian's time), and in all the cases that followed it, which therefore they insist on interpreting in conformity with that theory. This persistent affirmation about "the name" finally works conviction in their minds, as all persistent affirmations are wont to do in the minds even of scholars, when the affirmations are of purely historical matters, begin sufficiently near the events concerned, are sufficiently unanimous, are sufficiently continued, are not too improbable in themselves or in their relations to other known things, and especially when they fall upon ears predisposed to receive them sympathetically. In that case the hypnosis becomes complete.[1] The subjects thereof, whether they so phrase it to themselves or not, are disposed to believe that the early Christians were treated as already convicted criminals, because they justly sympathise with the Christians, and the Christians persistently said so.

But this is apparently not the only reason. There is another mental predisposition to reckon with, and a perfectly natural one. In the presence of a considerable number of isolated but evidently cognate phenomena there is a natural tendency in the trained human intellect (and sometimes in the untrained) to try to relate them together into a system, to unify the problem, to find a single rule to explain all the allied cases, a single cause to account for all the results.

[1] In a later chapter I shall point out that this is precisely the effect produced by the age-long reiteration of the assertion of the Roman Church regarding its relation to St. Peter, so far as the purely historical part of the claim is concerned. Of persecution "for the name" I have spoken in a previous chapter (pp. 60 ff.).

The early Christians felt this impulse. In the consciousness of their entire innocence of anything that they would call crime, they finally summed up the cases against them by asserting that they were made to suffer not for any wrong-doing, but "for the name" only. In this assertion some of their modern friends concur. Their course of reasoning is somewhat like this: the early Christians truly said that they were punished for the name only; but there was no legislation in the first two centuries directed against the name only; therefore there must have been at least a uniform administrative principle adopted, in conformity with which the magistrates constantly acted, and this could be only that the Christians were "enemies of humanity," "outlaws," "bandits," "to be hunted down like wild beasts," and so on. The proponents feel a mental compulsion toward the postulation of a single and enduring principle of action on the part of the Roman magistrates, and a corresponding mental repugnance against the postulation of a number of different motives and actions, varying in accordance with the circumstances of the chronologically separated cases; and in the ultimate issue the uniform Christian assertion about the name is the determining weight in the mental balance.

Now I have already pointed out (pp. 56 ff.) that in the early days of the hostile contacts between the State and Christianity we ought, on the contrary, to recognise the probability that there would be no uniform principle of action speedily adopted by the Roman power against Christians; no principle and no action at all (whatever the theoretically unsafe position of the sectaries), except now and then, here and there; and then an action or principle framed in accordance with the circumstances of the special emergency. For in spite of the traditional Roman regard for law and order and discipline and obedience and precedent, the Roman administration was always more or less of an oppor-

tunist administration (let us rather call it a flexible administration), ready to bend and adapt itself on occasion to meet the varying circumstances of the complex problems that confronted it in its widespread and heterogeneous dominions. Therein lay its enduring excellence. In none of the cited cases, however, did it need to go outside the bounds of its ordinary law and procedure. I have already indicated that at the very end of the second century Tertullian, the most learned, the most eloquent, and the most effective of the early Christian apologists, does not entirely agree with this sweeping assertion of these modern scholars. He does not describe the Roman provincial governors as treating Christians like outlaws, to whom only a short shrift and a long rope are due, whenever hand can be laid upon them. He does not indicate that immediately upon apprehension they are hurried off to punishment on executive order. He represents the magistrates as applying to them, as to any other citizens or subjects, the due and orderly processes of the law, as the magistrates understood it,—not at all as "hunting Christians down like wild beasts," or doing anything else of that savage and summary character. He does indeed point out that the defendants are arraigned merely as Christians (not as "brigands," or "outlaws," or anything of the kind), and that no act intrinsically immoral is directly and formally charged against them. In case they refuse to recant, they are indeed condemned as Christians, that is, in the Christian sense, condemned "for the name." But Tertullian claims that this is really because the magistrates wrongly believe them guilty of disloyalty and of the other heinous crimes popularly accredited to those of this name. He asserts that if the judges would only inquire into the real nature and conduct of the Christian associations, their eyes would be opened, and they would no longer condemn Christians, but acquit them. That is a most important

point to note and to heed. But it has not usually—perhaps has never—been noted by these modern controversialists, who would have us believe that a standing principle of Roman procedure from Nero's time (or from that of Domitian) put the Christians once for all outside the pale of the law, and dictated their certain condemnation, unless they disavowed the Christian name. Hence these vigorous terms of "brigands," "outlaws," "like wild beasts," which are one and all mere rhetorical inventions of the modern advocates to emphasise the strength of their own mistaken convictions. The evidence of Tertullian is plainly against them. He was a trained lawyer, and presumably knew what he was talking about. There is no trace in his apologetic of any notion of a far distant act, procedure, declaration—still less, of course, anything like an edict—which has hardened into such a permanent and irreformable legal precedent or principle as is averred. According to him there is indeed in his time a general fashion of summary procedure: but it is not founded on any legal enactment, precedent, or principle, which the magistrates are bound to follow. Christians are virtually, though not formally, condemned on false suspicion of serious moral delinquencies; confession of the name is taken to be confession of the crimes attributed to the name. But there is nothing in the customary procedure that it is not within the competence of the individual judge to disregard or to reverse in a moment, if he should choose to do so. There is no imperative and determining principle involved. Hence the whole point of Tertullian's impassioned harangue.

The question turned on the same virtual syllogism that I have before mentioned: the Christians as a body are guilty of such-and-such crimes; this man is a Christian; therefore he is guilty. He is condemned, therefore, merely as a Christian? No, but because, being a Christian, he is guilty of the crimes

practised by that association.[1] To be a Christian is not *per se* to commit a crime, but to be a Christian is to contract under certain circumstances a legal imputation of guilt.

The main point is that there is no hint here, no possibility here, of the existence of any such a standing legal principle as the scholars already referred to declare to have had since Nero's time (or since that of Domitian) a formal and recognised status. There is at most a customary procedure based on nothing more than a settled belief that Christians are actually guilty of crimes in their secret gatherings, and of treasonable disaffection toward the State. That is the summary of Tertullian's position on the matter. With it every case of persecution of Christians known to us in the second century and after Trajan's reign, is perfectly in accord. They are all simply and satisfactorily explicable without the postulation of any such principle of outlawry as that against the supposed existence of which this present argument is directed. The cases under Nero, Domitian, and Trajan are discussed in other chapters. None of them involve any principle of outlawry.

The proponents of the alleged principle must then face its antecedent improbability, the ease of explication of each individual case without appeal to it, and the competent and sufficient testimony of Tertullian to the non-existence of any such principle in his day. It should also be noted that the emperor Trajan, in the prosecutions of Christians in Bithynia, did not recognise the existence of any such standing principle of Roman procedure (see p. 195). Nor did Hadrian, in his rescript to Minicius Fundanus, governor of Asia (see p. 216). The burden of proof evidently rests heavily on the proponents. But I am not dis-

[1] Cf. Mommsen, *Ges. Schr.* iii. 393: "Wenn eine katholische Regierung ihre protestantische Soldaten anweist vor dem Sanctissimum zu knieen und den, der sich dessen weigert, wegen Ungehorsams bestraft, so bedruckt sie wohl die Protestanten, aber verbietet nicht den Protestantismus."

posed to take refuge merely in such a dialectic position, though it should not be disregarded in trying to get at the truth of a controversial historical question by examination of the opposing sides.

The existence of the "principle" now under discussion is not a historically attested fact. It is a postulation of certain modern scholars.[1] That it is not a necessary, nor even an extraordinarily convenient, postulation is shown by what has been set forth in preceding chapters of this book, and will be confirmed by the treatment of the Bithynian persecution, which is to follow. We are not forced to adopt it because of impossibilities, or even inconveniences, in the explication without its succour of all known cases of the persecution of Christians. It appeals to its proponents chiefly because, in the absence of any legislation directed specifically against Christianity, they yet feel an irresistible inner compulsion toward belief in some single juridical principle as explaining all the cases in a uniform fashion. They avoid once for all by this device what appear to them, with their mental prepossessions, to be, though they really are not, difficulties in interpretation.

The postulation is of something not historically attested; it is not demanded by the circumstances of any individual case; it is clearly against Tertullian's evidence; is it in itself reasonable? Is it in accord with recognised Roman character and with well-substantiated Roman legal procedure? The answer must surely be in the negative.

What legal modes of outlawry were in existence in

[1] The ball was really set rolling in 1890 by K. J. Neumann in his *Der römische Staat und die allgemeine Kirche.* Theodor Mommsen made this book the text for setting forth his own different theory in an article ("Der Religionsfrevel nach römischem Recht") in the *Historische Zeitschrift* of the same year, now reprinted in his *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. iii. pp. 389-422. Mommsen subjected Neumann to no detailed examination, but remarked briefly, "Die Grundgedanken, z.B. die Annahme einer 'Rechtlosigkeit' des Christenthums seit Domitian, scheinen mir schärferer juristischer Bestimmung bedürftig." This is a keen observation that the followers of Neumann might well take into serious consideration—but apparently do not.

the later times of the Roman republic? Two are clearly recognisable in cases that concerned Roman citizens. An offender might be interdicted from fire and water. This was effected by specific legislative enactment passed by the people assembled in *comitia*. It was not effected by direct or indirect judicial or administrative act of a magistrate. A citizen might be formally declared *hostis*. This was effected by a *senatus consultum*. It also was not effected by the mere proclamation or other official or casual dictum of a public officer. It was apparently a course adopted for the most part only in case of a rebel against whom it was purposed to proceed by military action.[1] There was also a lesser form of censure within the competence of the senate, which might declare a specified action of a citizen or citizens, whether accomplished or merely suspected to be in contemplation, to be against public interests (*contra* or *aduersus rem publicam*), that is, treasonable. This was a purely minatory procedure, usually employed, so far as we can determine from the few instances known, to forestall expected or to paralyse actual opposition to senatorial authority. On all other occasions than those specified, and that means on all ordinary occasions, the operation of what we may call statute law as administered by the various courts was held sufficient to maintain public safety and order. There was, of course, always in reserve the principle of self-help, exercisable by community as well as by individual, which might be put into action in times of special emergency, as, for example, by the magistrates in dealing with riots summarily by armed force. The lamentable proscriptions, of which we read in the last century of the Republic, should not be interpreted as extensions either of this principle of

[1] In after days Nero was declared *hostis* by the senate (Suet. *Nero* 49. 2, followed by Eutrop. vii. 15. 1 and Orosius vii. 7. 13). This was a judicial sentence of outlawry, and the antique character of the prescribed penalty (which was like that inflicted on the paramour of an errant Vestal) evidently harks back to the remote centuries of the Republic.

self-help, or of the inherent magisterial power of *coercitio* (which may be regarded as in essence merely another name for self-help exercised in the name and for the welfare of the community), or of the authority of military discipline. They had no better juristic or moral status than that of wholesale lynchings. But in the entire republican period there appears no precedent for declaring whole classes of persons, whether citizens or others, outlaws (*hostes*, or the like), unless they were actually engaged in overt acts of rebellion, and were therefore to be handed over to the military arm. Even thus it was a specific action taken on and applying to a specific occasion, and taken not by a single magistrate but by a competent legislative assembly. It had no indefinitely prolonged validity.

Thus far I have been speaking of Roman citizens. With regard to alien subjects of the Roman realm the case is not precisely the same. It might be judged that they, whether resident in Italy or in the provinces, had in the eye of the law no constitutional rights, but were subject to the arbitrary will or caprice of the magistrates for the time being. Yet the Roman mind was not in its nature capricious or unreasonable, any more than it was woodenly legalistic. Aliens were in general not treated as chattels but as human beings. The steady tendency was toward the extension over them of the same protective features of the law that citizens enjoyed. The government of aliens in the provinces offered the greatest opportunities for maltreatment by inhuman or conscienceless governors; for the governor was for the term of his office a practically absolute monarch over alien subjects in the district committed to his charge. Yet if he were guilty of notable acts of injustice, he might be followed back to Rome by complaints and charges of maladministration. This was, to be sure, a distant and difficult remedy, but it can hardly have failed to exercise some

restraint and control over the lawless propensities of bad men on the governor's tribunal.

Within the first century of the empire the *comitia* as a legislative body passed into practical oblivion, and the senate took its place in that respect, as it had begun to do even in the time of the Republic. But into competition with the nominally increased power of the senate had arisen another and a more rapidly developing rival, the authority of the *princeps*. Among all the various powers and immunities conferred upon that personage by the legislative act that recreated the principate in the person of each successive *princeps*, was as early as the accession of Vespasian one that authorised the Prince "to do or perform whatever he shall judge to be for the advantage of the State and for the majesty of divine and human, of public and private, interests, according to the right and authority granted to [Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius]" (*Lex de Imperio Vespasiani*, *CIL.* vi. 930). This was palpably to resign all authority into the hands of the emperor, so far as he might choose to avail himself of it. It was to establish a despotism temperable only by assassination, or by the antiquated device, revived in the case of Nero, of formally declaring the emperor *hostis*. In fact, however, the situation did not at once assume so alarming an aspect as this. The precedents of the first decades of the principate were in general regarded by the succeeding emperors, and for the first two centuries they continued to admit the senate (the membership of which was, to be sure, under their control) to a considerable share in the government of the realm. But the independent legislative, judicial, and administrative power of the supreme head of the State waxed more and more strong, until any and every "constitution" of the *princeps*, whether by edict, decree, rescript, or mandate, had the force of law. Just how rapidly this process of aggrandisement was moving in the second century, it is perhaps impossible

to determine with accuracy. But in practice it appears to have been already pretty well developed. It had, of course, its ample justification in the sweeping terms of the *lex de imperio*.

The governors of provinces of the imperial class, as legates of the emperor himself, were, of course, from the first subject to his control and direction, so far as he might choose to exercise it. Governors of the senatorial class of provinces were at first responsible to the senate. But gradually this distinction appears to vanish, and the imperial directive authority to be extended over all provinces alike (perhaps under the privilege of the *maius imperium*). About the details of provincial government we should be better informed, if only Ulpian's work on the functions of governors (*De officio proconsulis*) and that of Modestinus had been preserved. As it is, we have to fall back upon individual items culled chiefly from the historians, Christian apologists, and Roman jurists (especially quotations in the Pandects, which, however, often concern a later period than the second century); but for a single time and a single province (that of Pontus and Bithynia about A.D. 109–111 or 111–113) we have an invaluable document in the extant correspondence between Trajan and his deputy, the younger Pliny. From the digestion of all these sources we can form some general picture of a governor's functions and methods, though one that is unfortunately far from desirable precision of delineation.

In all appearance, as has just been remarked, a provincial governor was originally a practically unfettered ruler, so far at least as aliens were concerned. Even in the first two centuries of the empire he must have been endowed with a wide power of discretion. He was not, as a magistrate in Rome and Italy was, held to administer Roman legislative enactments in set form. He was dependent in great measure upon his own sense of justice and propriety. Not every

question could be referred back to distant Rome for solution, though Pliny does so refer a great many problems. The governor would be absolutely bound by imperial constitutions of whatever form, so far as they were by nature applicable to his particular province, and hence especially by rescripts addressed to him personally. He would also be guided by precedents, whether those were founded on decisions of his predecessors, or in pertinent cases on Roman law or (especially if his province were one of Greek origin) on the earlier laws and precedents of the region. So Trajan is continually instructing Pliny. In his own province the governor's criminal jurisdiction over aliens was absolute, but he must refer to Rome all capital cases concerning Roman citizens, unless he held from the emperor the special grant of the *ius gladii*, or could successfully plead a great public emergency and danger which precluded the delay incident to such reference. In general, with the growing tendency toward abolishing all legal distinctions between citizen and subject,[1] which culminated soon after the end of the second century in Caracalla's formal act granting full citizenship to all inhabitants of the realm, it is a safe conclusion that governors in the second century, notwithstanding their theoretical and early power of discretion, were expected to, and did, administer in the spirit of the Roman law, and not at all in an arbitrary manner, even when the case concerned an alien.

Imperial rescripts, such as those of Trajan to Pliny, were nominally applicable only to the particular province to the governor of which they were addressed; and as they were thus limited and personal interpre-

[1] In the matter of religion, for example, it is quite unreasonable to suppose that in the earlier ages of Roman history aliens would have been even permitted to share in Roman worship, since the Roman's gods were his own exclusive and jealously guarded property; but in the second century after Christ we find aliens and citizens alike bound to do reverence to the imperial divinities. Ancient religious theories had, of course, passed out of mind altogether. The matter had become one of practical politics.

tations, the period of their validity was subject to the will of the emperor who issued them, and in any case expired at his death. His successor might rule otherwise, if he chose; but with the Roman regard for tradition, they were likely to serve as more or less of a precedent in succeeding reigns, and for other regions than that of their original direction. Thus Trajan's rescript concerning the Bithynian Christians appears to have been observed in certain of its features as a precedent for Roman procedure regarding Christians all over the realm, and throughout the rest of the century.[1] The extension of it into the third century lies outside the scope of the present discussion.

But when all possible concessions have been made regarding the influence of precedent in Roman legal procedure, there is to be found in all the history of Roman law and administration no precedent that would justify the assumption of a pronouncement or other action that could possibly be regarded as putting any class of Roman citizens or subjects once for all outside the pale of the law. The whole spirit and tendency of Roman law and administration was in precisely the opposite direction, that of subjecting all men alike to the ordinary forms and processes of Roman jurisdiction. If the notion of Neumann, in Mommsen's gentle phrase, "needs more precise juridical attestation," it needs something that it never can get. It is utterly without reason for existence. It is unjustified by either necessity or convenience; it is against antecedent probability and the testimony of Tertullian;

[1] In the persecution in Gallia Lugdunensis (A.D. 177?), according to the account from the churches of Lyons and Vienne preserved in Eusebius (*H.E.* v. 1), the governor ordered the Christians to be sought out, contrary to Trajan's rescript. Similar pursuit elsewhere is also asserted by certain Christian apologists of the second half of the second century, but it is by no means certain that this was by official order and not rather by private zeal and malevolence. Neither Justin nor Tertullian intimates such a thing, and Melito (*ap.* Eus. *H.E.* iv. 26) clearly should be understood as indicating that such pursuit as he protests against was not due to official initiative. The alleged testimony of *Acta Martyrum* (and perhaps even that of the churches in Lugdunensis) on such a point is, of course, without value.

and it contradicts all the nature, tendency, and history of Roman jurisprudence and administration.

In the article referred to above (p. 137, n. 1) Mommsen availed himself of his great learning and authority to propound yet another theory that would include all the legal actions against Christians under a single unifying principle. He held that the common-law police authority of the higher magistrates (*coercitio*) might be readily called into action at any time to control these pestilent sectaries, and that its exercise satisfactorily accounts for all (or nearly all) questions of difficulty that might be raised about the repressive administration to which the Christians (and occasionally other Nonconformists) were at various times subjected.

The term *coercitio* occurs but seldom in the Roman juristic writings,[1] and then (unless I have overlooked some instances) not precisely in the sense attributed to it by Mommsen. Yet there is no reason to doubt the existence of such a power. The only question is about the scope and frequency of its application. The infrequency of specific reference to it in antiquity might be taken to indicate that it was not popularly recognised, nor frequently brought into play. It appears to have been generally a latent rather than an active authority. It is difficult to believe that it would be invoked except in times of especial stress and danger (when it might temporarily even supersede the laws, as by a sort of "suspension of constitutional guaranties"), and when the usual and recognised statutory processes failed to provide sufficiently against emergent offences. *Coercitio* was surely not under ordinary circumstances a discretionary substitute for existent law, though it might be sometimes a supplement or assistant of it. But unless we are bound to believe

[1] Since *coercitio* must be viewed as in essence an administrative rather than a judicial authority, this infrequency of mention may, of course, be due only to the disappearance of those legal treatises that especially discussed administration, such as the works of Ulpian and Modestinus on the duties of various officials, including provincial governors.

that the Christians suffered simply and solely, in the most strict and literal sense of the term, "for the name," or that their offence was clearly not covered by ordinary legal provisions, it is not necessary to postulate the use of *coercitio* to account for the conduct and issue of such cases against Christians as those with which we are well acquainted. We are rather bound to account for them, and *a fortiori* for the less known others, on ordinary grounds. That is readily enough done.

To the very end of this chapter has been postponed the mention of the passage from which its title was taken. Some writers have believed that the "short and easy way with dissenters" was in one place actually recognised by Tertullian as a legal principle established for all time thereafter by Nero. The passage concerned is in Tertullian's treatise *Ad Nationes* (1. 7):

> "In the reign of Augustus this name had its birth; that of Tiberius was illumined by its doctrine; under Nero its ill reputation so prevailed that thenceforth you may estimate it by the character of its persecutor. If he was a good prince, Christians are wicked; if he was righteous, if virtuous, Christians are unrighteous and vile; if he was not a public enemy (*hostis publicus*), we are so; the judge who condemned has himself proved our character by punishing what was antagonistic to his own. And yet, while everything else established by Nero has been wiped out, this only has survived (*et tamen permansit erasis omnibus hoc solum institutum Neronianum*)."

The passage as a whole, and particularly the phrase *institutum Neronianum*, must be interpreted from the consideration of the chapter in which it stands. Tertullian is talking here not at all of the legal status or treatment of Christians, but purely of their social repute. "Why," ask his opponents, "have you such a bad reputation, unless indeed you deserve it?" "On whose authority," Tertullian asks in reply, "do you

believe us bad? Simply on that of rumour, and rumour is ever a deceptive and lying jade. But whatever she says comes by constant repetition to be taken as the truth. Truth on her lips never grows; it shortly perishes; but in falsehood she takes delight; it flourishes there and endures. The false report she initiated against us has now come to be an article of popular faith. Christ was born in the time of Augustus; his doctrine was made known to the world under Tiberius; its ill-repute began under Nero, the first persecutor—a worthy and fitting enemy of all good. All the rest of his acts are disregarded and forgotten; this only remains to the present day, and sets the tone of all popular repute of Christians."[1]

It is certain, then, that this passage from Tertullian has no possible reference to the assumed perpetuation of a standing legal precedent or principle from Nero's reign that regarded Christians as *ipso facto* outlaws. It pertains simply and solely to the popular ill-repute of Christians, which Tertullian, from his reading of the characterisation of them in Suetonius, and probably from the passage in Melito, thinks had its origin in the first persecution. It will be remembered that outside of these two passages, and of the late second-century belief that Sts. Peter and Paul met their death under Nero, Tertullian had no information about this persecution.

In view of this fact it is easy to discern the origin of Tertullian's actual phrase *institutum Neronianum*. It was suggested by the opening words of Suet. *Nero* 16. 2, the paragraph in which Suetonius enumerates

[1] That Tertullian was acquainted with the works of Melito appears in itself likely, and may be regarded as probably confirmed by certain verbal and material similarities in the writings of the two scholars, and by a reference preserved in Jerome (*De Vir. Ill.* 24) to a lost work of Tertullian: *Huius* [sc. *Melitonis*] *elegans et declamatorium ingenium Tertullianus in septem libris quos scripsit aduersus ecclesiam pro Montano cauillatur dicens eum a plerisque nostrorum prophetam putari.* The passage from Tert. *ad Nat.* above summarised corresponds so closely to some sentences of Melito quoted by Eusebius (*H.E.* iv. 26 [190]) as to suggest that Tertullian herein had Melito in mind.

sundry praiseworthy acts of the emperor. In his introductory sentence he remarks that under Nero many old abuses were actively reformed and corrected, and many new provisions inaugurated (*multa sub eo et animaduersa seuere et coercita, nec minus instituta*). Then follows the list of actions, in the first half of which occurs the statement about Christians (see p. 84 of the preceding chapter of this book). It would appear to the modern reader perfectly evident that Suetonius includes the action of Nero against Christians among the *animaduersa seuere et coercita*; but Tertullian, full of his oft-repeated conviction that Nero was the *fons et origo* of all the persecutions and slanders directed against Christians, apparently counted it among the *multa sub eo instituta*. But the matter of verbal source is only of slight interest, so long as it is perfectly clear that no question of the genealogical succession of any juristic principle is involved, but only one of the popular repute of Christianity.[1]

[1] *Institutum*, of course, means merely an act that is later regarded as a precedent. But the proper word for an act that established a legal precedent ("rule" or "regulation") would appear to be *constitutum* or *constitutio*. It will be noted that Tertullian nowhere says that the governors themselves referred to Nero, or to his *institutum*, as authority or precedent for their own action against Christians.

CHAPTER VI

THE ALLEGED PERSECUTION BY DOMITIAN

The emperor Domitian does not appear to have been by any means a notable exponent and exemplar of personal morality, but he was a staunch champion of orthodoxy. His especial interest in the upholding and upbuilding of the established faith, so far at least as its external observances were concerned, is exposed, however, to some suspicion of admixture of a personal element. The exaltation of the reigning Augustus as a present deity was his particular passion. What is called emperor-worship had been carried on in varying degree in different quarters of the empire for a century or so, but for the most part the reigning monarchs had looked upon it with tolerance rather than with active and fostering approbation. It was an expression of civic loyalty centering around a natural concrete object. For some reason or reasons that need not be discussed here, Domitian appears to have been disposed to promote it by every insistence at his command. He may have been touched by that megalomania which in the case of Caligula had amounted to a real insanity. It is impossible to decide on this point with confidence, as the extant records of his life are so scanty and otherwise unsatisfactory. In his zeal for orthodoxy he revived the antiquated horror of entombing alive a chief vestal who was charged with breaking her vow of chastity, and he compelled to suicide other vestals, while their paramours were

flogged to death in accordance with ancient precedent.[1] In his jealousy for his personal and official prerogative, and his fear of conspiracy aimed at his life, he terrorised the senate, and brought to destruction so many of its leading members, that the latter part of his reign is spoken of by his surviving contemporaries as an orgy of bloodshed. He executed his own cousin, Flauius Sabinus, because the herald in announcing his election made a slip of the tongue, and hailed him not "consul" but "imperator."[2] What happened to the herald we are not told. Another cousin, Flauius Clemens, brother of Sabinus, was also a victim. His case is of especial interest as the peg on which hangs the present investigation. It is known to us, so far as it can be said to be known, through the two extant historians of Domitian's reign, Suetonius and Cassius Dio, both being pagans.

Suetonius, a contemporary witness, in all probability resident in Rome at the time, and apparently on terms of friendly acquaintance, so far as that was possible for a young man, with Romans of high station, tells us very briefly:

> "Later [Domitian] suddenly put to death on the merest suspicion and almost in his very consulship his own cousin, Flauius Clemens, a man despised for his lack of energy."[3]

It is hard to say just what *inertia* means here. It may be that "lack of energy" or "lack of activity," or "want of reasonable ambition," corresponds to the idea; or it may mean "absence of interest in public affairs," or only "leading a retired life."

Suetonius had just been describing Domitian's fear of death by conspiracy and assassination. The clear intimation is that this is the reason why he brought

[1] Cf. Suet. *Dom.* 8; Plin. *Ep.* iv. 11.

[2] Suet. *Dom.* 10.

[3] Suet. *Dom.* 15 *Flauium Clementem patruelem suum, contemptissimae inertiae, cuius filios etiam tum paruulos successores palam destinauerat . . . repente ex tenuissima suspicione tantum non in ipso eius consulatu interemit.*

about the death of Clemens, whom he had just honoured by raising him to the consulship as his own colleague in the office (A.D. 95), and whose two sons he had virtually adopted as heirs to his throne. He suddenly became suspicious that Clemens was unwilling to await longer the time when one or both of his sons should wear the crown, and was plotting against his imperial cousin's life. Suetonius characterises Clemens as *contemptissimae inertiae* doubtless merely to accentuate the improbability of the suspicion: Clemens was not a person who had ever shown the least disposition to push himself in any way; his pronounced lack of that activity in public life which would befit a person of his family and social connections had exposed him to much unfavourable and even contemptuous comment; it was quite impossible for such a man to be a secret conspirator; he was surely innocent.

Suetonius does not say by what means the death of Clemens was compassed. It in all probability was, as in the cases of other persons of senatorial rank put to death in the Terror, through the form of a trial before an obsequious senate, ready to register the will of the emperor without regard to such irrelevant matters as sufficient evidence of guilt on the part of the accused. Such men as Tacitus and Pliny sat in that senate, and shared in its many votes of predetermined condemnation; and neither the remorseful *peccauimus* of the one, eloquently phrased after the tyrant's death had made it safe to repent, nor the bitter reminiscences of the other, can help the modern reader to pardon all through understanding all.

It is by no means necessary to suppose that the actual charge under which Clemens suffered was that of plotting assassination. In that case other persons would surely have been involved, and the series of cases would have been so imposing as to have left a definite trace in the record of even so brief a reporter as Suetonius. He indicates what he conceived to be

the real reason for the condemnation of Clemens; he does not state the form of the legal charge against him. If the emperor had only an unfounded suspicion to go upon, he would naturally seek for an accusation in support of which some sort of plausible evidence could be trumped up. With the formal means by which the ruin of the innocent victim was brought about, Suetonius does not trouble himself: the fact gives him an opportunity to conclude his paragraph with the Roman comment on the ineluctable irony of fate:

"By this very deed he especially hurried on his own destruction."

Yet, singularly enough, Suetonius does not proceed to show how this cruel act, by which Domitian thought to assure his life, was the very cause that brought him to his end. Only some distance farther on do we find a statement which, by the help of interpretation from another source, furnishes the true key to the remark which would otherwise remain somewhat enigmatic. In mentioning the final and successful conspiracy against Domitian's life Suetonius says:

"Stephanus, a steward of Domitilla, himself at the time under charges of keeping back funds, offered his advice and assistance." [1]

It was this Stephanus who encouraged the hesitant conspirators, possibly arranged the plans, certainly struck the first blow with his own dagger. But Suetonius has said not a word to indicate who this Domitilla was, who had a *procurator* or steward (doubtless, from his office, a freedman—Dio and Philostratus definitely call him so) named Stephanus. Flauia Domitilla was the name, according to Suetonius, of both the mother and the sister of Domitian, but

[1] Suet. *Dom.* 17 *Stephanus, Domitillae procurator, et tunc interceptarum pecuniarum reus, consilium operamque obtulit.*

these persons had both been dead for more than a quarter of a century.[1] Evidently neither of them could be the Domitilla referred to here, and they are the only other bearers of that name mentioned by Suetonius. His account is inexcusably defective in this matter. We must take refuge in the narrative written a century or so later by Cassius Dio. Here again we are confronted by a difficulty. Almost all of the part of Dio's history that describes the reign of Domitian is extant only in the abridgement made by Xiphilinus, a Christian monk of the eleventh century. And Suetonius and Dio are the only extant historians (if Suetonius may, for the sake of courtesy, be called a historian) of Domitian's reign. But in the lack of the full original, the studious Xiphilinus must be trusted. He says:

"In the same year [A.D. 95] Domitian slaughtered many others, including the consul, Flauius Clemens, though Clemens was his own cousin, and had to wife Flauia Domitilla, herself also a kinswoman of his. Against them both was brought the charge of 'atheism,' for which also many others were condemned who had drifted into the practices of the Jews. Of these some were put to death, others deprived of their property; Domitilla was only banished to Pandateria. And he also put to death Glabrio, who had been consul with Trajan [A.D. 91], on the usual stock charges, and because he had fought with wild beasts. For Domitian was especially incensed against him through jealousy on this account, in that he had summoned Glabrio while yet consul to his Alban country-seat to attend the so-called *Iuuenalia*, and had set him to slay an immense lion, which feat he accomplished not only without suffering any injury, but despatching his adversary in most workmanlike fashion."[2]

Before proceeding to the further ransacking of this passage from Dio we may trim up the shreds that Suetonius left hanging. Here is a third Flauia Domitilla, wife of Flauius Clemens, and kinswoman of the emperor, presumably from name and probable

[1] Suet. *Dom.* 3. [2] Cass. Dio lxvii. 14.

age his niece,[1] the daughter of his sister of the same name, who had died before Vespasian, their father, reached the throne. Stephanus was evidently the steward of this third Domitilla, and his indignation and grief at the fate of his master and mistress, joined perhaps with fears for his own safety (he was probably trying loyally in Domitilla's behalf to secrete from confiscation some part of her and her husband's property), led him to take a leading part in the slaying of the titled assassin. Thus fate turned Domitian's bloodstained hand against himself.

Dio and Suetonius complement each the other in the matter of Clemens. Suetonius assigns what appears to him to be the real underlying reason for the execution of Clemens, but says nothing of the specific charge on which he was condemned: Dio (or perhaps only Xiphilinus) does not attempt to penetrate below the surface, but says that the charge against him and Domitilla and many others was "atheism," with the implication that the two named persons, like the "many others" mentioned in immediate connection, had incurred the charge by adopting Jewish practices. It is, of course, not clear whether they were supposed to be full proselytes to the Jewish religion, or only numbered among those "devout men" who were not entirely committed to the keeping of the complete Mosaic law. Very likely most of the Romans of any social station resident in the capital knew nothing and cared less about any such distinction. But could a charge of "atheism" hold against Jews or Jewish proselytes or quasi-proselytes?

Certainly not in strict legality, or at least under established precedents, against Jews. The Jewish religion had been, up to the destruction of the last vestiges of the Palestinian kingdom by Titus, a *religio licita*, as the official religion of an allied state.

[1] Quintilian also indicates this relationship, when he says (*Inst.* iv. pr. 2), *cum uero mihi Domitianus Augustus sororis suae nepotum delegauerit curam.*

It could therefore be freely practised by any Jew, and the Roman authority had not in fact troubled itself about the question whether a Roman or Latin citizen was permitted to be or to become a Jew in religion. Even after the destruction of the Jewish state the same toleration was continued, though it had now lost its former basis in theory. The Jew might still plead the customs of his fathers as explaining why he did not share in the worship of the Romans. As regards a Roman or Latin citizen, the State did not care how many or what gods he worshipped; but on the other hand the State had never said (except apparently in the case of the Jews by blood as well as religion, many of whom were Roman or Latin citizens) that he might effectively plead his favourite exotic religion as ground for excuse from the common obligations of citizenship. The emperor-worship was gradually coming to be regarded as a test of loyalty in citizenship, and the natural Roman mind—still more the official Roman mind—could not conceive that such a purely conscientious conviction on the part of any sectary could possibly exist as would inhibit him, if he were indeed a loyal citizen and a Roman, from invoking the emperor's *Genius*, or from dropping a few grains of incense on a fire burning in a tripod-bowl before his statue. If the citizen refused such a test of loyalty, especially if it was demanded of him by competent legal authority (and it was for the magistrate himself to decide that point), or if he notoriously absented himself from such popular loyal demonstrations as involved this ceremonial, he appears to have been theoretically exposed to a charge of constructive treason, disloyal irreverence, "atheism." Fortunately the Romans were not much devoted to carrying into practice legal theories, however logically deduced, that were without precedent in actual history. They were tolerant by nature, not purely legalistic by temper, and fonder of observing precedents in administration than of creating them.

Therefore there is known to have been little trouble up to Domitian's time on the score of religious non-conformity.

But Domitian appears to have been an apostle of conformity. He did not, so far as we know, molest the Jews who were Jews by race, except by increasing the strictness with which they were watched, and by enforcing more rigorously the inconsiderable financial exactions to which they were now legally liable; but it is conceivable that he was fretted by their "special privileges," and that he meant to put deterrent pressure at least upon such prominent Roman citizens as were inclined to "drift into Jewish practices." They must at any rate conform. If they wished over and above their due civic conformity to add the worship of any other deities, that (I imagine he would say) was their own business and none of his. Domitian's theories about conformity do not appear to have been essentially different from those of educated Romans in general; he seems merely to have been disposed to be more urgent about enforcing conformity than were his predecessors on the throne and most of his successors. He might have pushed the matter still farther, if he had lived longer. As it is, we may be justified in guessing that these processes of the last few months of his reign were the only ones of the sort that he carried out. It was to the Roman mind, of course, a purely political measure of administration, not a religious one, at least in our sense of the word religious.

Suetonius furnishes not a hint of any prosecutions by Domitian based on charges of "atheism." He speaks of Glabrio as put to death in exile on the charge of conspiracy to foment rebellion.[1] The connection in which Dio mentions the condemnation of Glabrio might appear to indicate that among "the usual stock charges" against him was that of "atheism"; for Dio appears to separate these cases of "atheism"

[1] Suet. *Dom.* 10 *quasi molitor rerum nouarum.*

from the many others purely political that involved members of "the Stoic opposition," and Glabrio's case is noted immediately after those of the former group. Yet the contemporary Suetonius could hardly have been in error about the fact that Glabrio was in exile at the time of his death-sentence, and a charge of "atheism" would hardly seem likely under those circumstances, unless indeed it were the revamping of an old indictment. That is certainly not incredible, but it is not probable.

With regard to all these cases where different charges against the same defendant are specified by different writers, the student of Roman antiquity will remember that the Romans had no strict law of evidence, and enforced no rigid confinement of the prosecution to the specific charges alleged in the indictment, or in what corresponded to that document. On the contrary, Roman legal procedure genially allowed the prosecution to range over the whole past life of the defendant, and to bring forward, with or without evidence, anything and everything that could tend to incriminate his general character in the minds of the jurors; and in cases against senators the senate sat as a jury.

The Jews were popularly charged by their opponents with "atheism," both in the religious and in the political sense of the word; in the former sense, because they erected no temples to their deity in addition to the one at Jerusalem, and did not represent him even there by any graven image; in the latter, because they would not join in the popular rites of the Romans, and especially in emperor-worship, considering it, of course, the rankest idolatry.[1] To the emperor who required himself to be always addressed in speech or writing as *Dominus et Deus Noster*,[2] this must have

[1] Cf., *e.g.*, Tac. *Hist.* v. 5, and the citations given by J. Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'empire romain*, i., pp. 45 ff.

[2] Suet. *Dom.* 13.

been a most flagrant and disloyal insult to his manifest divinity. It is quite conceivable that among the senators who were hostile to Domitian there may have been many who betrayed an aversion to his overweening pretensions to godhead, and among the miscellaneous charges that Roman procedure allowed to be alleged against defendants who were brought to book, that of "Jewish atheism" would in their cases be one of the most available, and one of the easiest to substantiate from their past demeanour, when no other conclusive evidence was demanded.

Neither Suetonius nor other contemporaries like Tacitus and Pliny, who furnish us with vivid glimpses of the Terror, afford any hint of charges of that religious nonconformity which was apparently viewed by Domitian (as by the Roman magistrates in the second half of the following century) as a form of constructive high-treason. The contemporaries treat all the cases of the Terror as political, since in essence they notoriously were so. But there appears to be no reason to suspect that Dio is wrong in his intimation that among the specific charges of "the usual stock" sort in many such cases was that of "Jewish atheism." It evidently does not of necessity follow that in all of the cases thus designated by Dio the defendants actually were Judaisers in religion—only that their reserved attitude toward Domitian's arrogant claims to divinity laid them open to such a charge. Of course there may have been actual Judaisers among them, but it is unsafe to affirm this on the basis of Dio's account.

It should be further observed that neither in Suetonius, nor in Dio, nor in any other of the pagan writers who touch upon the subject, is there the slightest intimation that Domitian's bloody jealousy was directed against any but the leading aristocrats whom he supposed he had reason to fear, or that it ravaged at all outside the narrow circle of the Court and the Parliament. There is no indication of its

extension into the provinces, or among the commonalty even in Rome. And if there had been such extension, it is altogether probable that some echo of it would be heard. There is absolute silence.

Thus stands the complete case so far as all contemporary evidence goes, and all pagan evidence, whether contemporary or (in the case of Dio) derived from now unknown sources. The alleged testimony of a certain pagan "Bruttius" will be considered later.

But Christian writers have a somewhat different story to tell. To the consideration of this we may now turn.

Those students who have convinced themselves that the Apocalypse of St. John furnishes actual evidence of a persecution of Christians by Domitian are wont to base their certainty, first, on the definite ascription of the work to the last part of Domitian's reign, and then, on the interpretation of certain specific passages, such as Rev. ii. 13; vi. 9; xii. 11; xvii. 6; xx. 4. Into the troubled questions about the authorship, date, source, structure, circumstances, and interpretation of this mystical work, I certainly cannot enter here. But assuming the disputed points to stand in general as these advocates would have them, I would yet indicate certain considerations that appear only rational. The first is, that fervid and enthusiastic apocalyptic utterances are in general very unsafe primary bases on which to rest assertions of cold historical facts, particularly regarding a contested thesis; they are especially so when such value as they may have depends not merely on the correctness of the interpretation of them, but also on the preliminary determination of other fundamental and yet contested questions regarding the document of which they form a part. The second consideration is, that organised and systematic persecutions, legal in form and carried out by public judicial authority, are one thing, while more or less isolated, individual, and sporadic cases of suffering

for righteousness' sake are quite another. It is not supposed or claimed by any one, ancient or modern, that persecutions in the first and proper sense took place under more than a specified few of the Roman emperors; it might well be supposed that persecutions in the limited second sense were taking place now and then, here and there, in every reign and in every quarter of the Roman world, beginning, indeed, at Jerusalem in the very earliest years of the Church. And as regards the cited passages from the Book of Revelation, it should be noted that (interpreted as historical allusions and not as prophetic utterances) they do not profess or appear to pertain, any or all of them, necessarily to the present or the immediate past, but only to the indefinite past, extending possibly over quite a long period; and furthermore, they are perfectly explicable as referring to such individual cases as do not presume any organised, systematic, legal action. The Book of Revelation certainly ought not to be cited as furnishing historical evidence, whether primary or corroborative, of such a persecution of Christians by Domitian as is usually meant by that term, among ancients and moderns alike.[1]

In the first sentence (after the salutation) of the letter of the Roman Church to the Corinthian, commonly called *First Clement*, the scribe says:

"Through unexpected and repeated troubles and hindrances that have confronted us we have been too long (in our judgement) delayed in turning our attention to the matters in dispute among you," etc.[2]

That appears to me an accurate translation of the Greek, reading περιστάσεις (with the Constantinople MS.), and interpreting it by *impedimenta* of the ancient Latin version. The language does not suggest to an

[1] See also what is said on pp. 115 ff.

[2] Διὰ τὰς αἰφνιδίους καὶ ἐπαλλήλους γενομένας ἡμῖν συμφορὰς καὶ περιστάσεις, ἀδελφοί, βράδιον νομίζομεν ἐπιστροφὴν πεποιῆσθαι περὶ τῶν ἐπιζητουμένων παρ' ὑμῖν πραγμάτων, κτλ.

unprejudiced eye that anything very terrible has shaken the Roman Church. It sounds curiously like an apologetic introduction to a modern letter—"I really meant to write you long ago, but all sorts of bothering things have interfered." Yet critics almost or quite unanimously have agreed that the words quoted have definite and unmistakable reference to a terrible persecution through which the Church at Rome has just been passing. As the accredited list of persecutors includes from the first century only Nero and Domitian, the assaults of one or the other of these are believed to be meant. Earlier critics were sometimes disposed to decide for Nero; later men, seeing the impossibility of dating the letter so far back, but being under the same formidable preoccupation of mind resulting from the felt necessity of somehow identifying the anonymous scribe of this letter with the Clement of Hermas and Clement the bishop,[1] and anxious to gain every possible support for that position, have insisted with substantial unanimity that Domitian's persecution was plainly the one in mind. Of course these critics, starting with their presumption, would not be satisfied with such an obvious and simple rendering of the phrase as I have given above. Like their ancient prototypes, they are disposed to colour the dull picture up a bit. The paenultimate translator gives us "misfortunes and calamities"; but περιπτώσεις, which he would prefer in place of περιστάσεις, appears hardly to be susceptible of such a strong meaning. It is rather merely "accidents." Moreover, these critics have not succeeded in explaining satisfactorily why the writer uses such vague phraseology, if he is talking about a virulent persecution lately suffered, when his later pages show that he can speak plainly enough about θλίψεις from without. It is absurd to say, as some have done, that he was afraid of Domitian, who was yet living.

[1] Cf. the later chapter of this book on "Clement of Rome."

I shall also point out in the chapter on Clement of Rome, that the letter in question cannot possibly be assigned to the last months of Domitian's reign, or to a period immediately thereafter. Accordingly it is quite preposterous to claim that the innocent sentence with which it starts bears manifest and conscious witness to a persecution of the Church in Rome by Domitian.

We may therefore pass on at once to the definite statement of Melito, made about A.D. 170-180, and preserved only in Eusebius. Melito is quoted by him as asserting to Marcus Aurelius that the Church had, together with the realm, enjoyed unbroken prosperity under all the emperors except Nero and Domitian :

> "Nero and Domitian alone, misled by certain malignant persons, were disposed to exhibit enmity toward [or, to bring false accusations against] the doctrine held among us." [1]

This, three-quarters of a century after the event, is the earliest extant mention of Domitian as a persecutor of Christians. The bishop of Sardis could hardly have been ignorant of occasional sufferings of Christians at other times; it is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that he has reference to systematic and formal persecutions. But whence did he derive his information about Domitian? In the lack of known literary source for the statement, it might seem natural to suppose that the Church had preserved and handed down an oral tradition to that effect. But besides the general warning already given about the too ready assumption of the existence of such genuine though unwritten historical traditions,[2] it may be remarked that Melito's statement affords a bit of definite and specific illustration of ground for the belief that such unsupported traditions did not in general exist in the first century of the Church. The Churches in Bithynia

[1] Eus. *H.E.* iv. 26 (190) : the Greek text is given in the note on p. 120 of this volume.

[2] See pp. 11 ff.

were quite near neighbours of that over which Melito presided, and while he was perhaps himself already living as a child or youth, they had suffered a persecution, under Trajan, which, though happily of short duration and not marked by wanton savagery, yet in its character as a series of legal processes, and perhaps even in the number of victims—certainly (if we can trust Pliny's report)[1] in the effect of temporary suppression of Christian influence on the local communities—was directly comparable with the persecution at Rome under Nero. It hardly seems likely that the bishop of Sardis would have overlooked or have wilfully omitted from mention the Bithynian persecution, if he had known that there had ever been such a thing. The only reasonable inference is that he did not know anything of it, which means that no report of such a striking episode in Christian history as that in several respects was,[2] had found a place in the "archives" of his not very far distant Church, and no oral tradition thereof had been so perpetuated as to have reached his ear. That is a significant fact to notice for its bearing upon the question of the existence of oral historical traditions in the earliest Church.

To the question of the possible or probable source of Melito's statement about Domitian, I shall recur later. The next Christian witness to be cited is Hegesippus, who was substantially a (younger ?) contemporary of Melito. Here again we have to depend on a quotation preserved in Eusebius,[3] according to which Domitian, being assured of the purely spiritual character of Christ's expected kingdom by his personal examination of two grandsons of Jude, "the Lord's brother," stopped by edict the persecution of the Church. Hegesippus, then, apparently had

[1] Plin. *Ep.* x. 96. 10.

[2] Among other things it gave occasion for a rescript of Trajan which established a new legal principle with regard to the trials of Christians, and served as a precedent for succeeding action throughout the century.

[3] Eus. *H.E.* iii. 20 [110].

spoken of Domitian as a persecutor. What his source was for the story of the interview with the kinsmen of Our Lord, we cannot tell. The account was probably either mythical throughout, or else based upon an investigation conducted in Palestine, perhaps by the emperor's order, but surely not by himself in person.

Tertullian, a quarter of a century later, mentions both Nero and Domitian as persecutors, telling us that,

> "Domitian had begun the same thing [as Nero], but being also a man, readily gave up his undertaking, and restored those whom he had banished." [1]

Tertullian's source also is unknown, but there is a flavour in his statement of both Melito and Hegesippus. Tertullian's *temptauerat* suggests Melito's *ἠθέλησαν*; the statement that the persecution was brief appears to agree with both writers; while the ascription of the change of policy to a humane feeling might well have come from Hegesippus, as others (I think) have noted. It will be remarked that the translator who put Tertullian's Latin into the Greek version that was used by Eusebius,[2] rendered the African writer's *sed qua et homo* by *ἀλλ' οἷμαι ἅτε ἔχων τι συνέσεως*,[3] which may be a correct interpretation. But Tertullian's statement that Domitian himself recalled the exiles can hardly be a faithful report of his source, and is certainly wrong in fact.[4] The recall was correctly ascribed to Nerva by Eusebius in his *Chronicles*, as well as in his *History* (iii. 20 [111]).

[1] Tert. *Apol.* 5.

[2] Cf. Eus. *H.E.* ii. 2 [48]; iii. 33 [129].

[3] Cf. Eus. *H.E.* iii. 20 [110].

[4] Could Tertullian have got this notion from a careless reading or a faulty memory of Plin. *Ep.* 1. 5, or perhaps from other of the *Letters* also where certain of the exiles are mentioned as back in Rome? He was a good deal of a blunderer, and the thing is not impossible. He was acquainted at first or second hand with the correspondence of Pliny and Trajan about the persecution in Bithynia, and might perhaps have read the other *Letters*. He certainly had read Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars* (see p. 121), and appears to have got from that work his only information (outside of the mention in Melito), entirely lacking in detail, of the persecution by Nero. (He surely could not have read the account in the *Annals* of Tacitus; cf. pp. 86, n. 1, 121.) It is possible that he had read of the recall in the (no longer extant) life of Nerva by Marius Maximus (*c.* A.D. 165-230), but through faulty memory ascribed it here to Domitian, thinking that he had read it in Suetonius.

That is as far as Christian tradition appears to have gone, up to the end of the second century, about Domitian as a persecutor. From Tertullian onward, in the numerical list of persecutors that came to be traditional among Christian writers, Nero and Domitian consistently occupy the first and second places respectively.[1] But by the time of Eusebius, a century or more later (and perhaps considerably earlier than Eusebius), a definite link had been discovered or created that connected Christianity with the aristocratic Terror under Domitian.

Eusebius tells us [2] that the doctrine of the faith so far prevailed [under the Flavians] that even non-Christian historians have not hesitated to record the persecution [by Domitian] and the martyrdoms connected with it, narrating that along with very many others Flauia Domitilla, whose mother was the sister of Flauius Clemens,[3] one of the consuls of Rome at the time, was banished on account of her witness for Christ. In his *Chronicles* [4] he cites " Bruttius " as authority for the statement that Domitilla was punished as a Christian. This " Bruttius " evidently, then, constitutes alone the " non-Christian writers " referred

[1] Though Sulpicius Seuerus, *Chron.* ii. 30. 6, 7, probably depending (though perhaps not very precisely) on a now lost part of Tac. *Hist.* v., says that Titus wished to destroy the Christian as well as the Jewish religion.

[2] Eus. *H.E.* iii. 18 [109].

[3] Philostratus (*Apoll.* 8. 25) correctly says that Domitilla was the wife of Clemens, but calls her the sister of Domitian. As has been said above, she was the daughter of Domitian's sister; and she was also the " first cousin once removed " of her husband, Clemens, who was himself the son of T. Flauius Sabinus, brother of Vespasian, and got his *cognomen* apparently from his maternal grandfather, M. Arrecinus Tertullus Clemens. (In the account of Philostratus ἀδελφήν may have been a slip of some copyist's pen for ἀδελφιδήν.) But the error of Eusebius, or of his Bruttius, joined with discrepancy in the name of the island to which Domitilla was banished (Dio says Pandateria, Eusebius — or Bruttius ?—Pontia), and with some other variations in the Domitilla story (especially in the generally apocryphal *Acts of Sts. Nereus and Achilles*), has led various scholars to believe that there were actually two Domitillas of Domitian's kin banished by him. The notion appears to me certainly wrong, but does not intimately concern my present theme : however, those who are further interested may consult, against the duplication of Domitillas, Gsell's *Essai sur le règne de l'empereur Domitien*, and for it, Edmundson's *Church in Rome in the First Century*.

[4] Eus. *Chron.* sub ann. Abr. 2110, 14th year of Domitian's reign, Armenian version. Schoene's edition has the spelling " Brettius."

to in the *Church History*, and is plainly taken by Eusebius to have been a pagan.

Manuscripts and ancient versions of Eusebius give the name of his quoted authority variously (Βρούττιος, Brettius, Burtnus), but what was doubtless intended is a transliteration of the Latin *gentilicium* Bruttius. This is a name by no means unknown in the late Republic and first three centuries of the Empire, though the chief source of our knowledge of it is inscriptions. Bruttii filled prominent offices in the imperial administration. But it is a striking fact that no mention of or slightest allusion to a Bruttius who was a historian appears anywhere before Eusebius or for centuries after him. Only when we get down to John Malalas, that crabbed Byzantine who wrote in the sixth century or later, we find him quoting a Βούττιος, or Βόττιος, or Βώττιος, as a "historical chronographer," in the explanation of the Danae-myth and in comments on Alexander's campaigns. (Malalas' blundering copying of Eusebius on the Domitilla matter, and the further repetition by Syncellus and the *Chronicon Paschale* are of course without evidential significance.) This man is possibly the same as the Bruttius of Eusebius, but may be another person altogether.

The various difficulties in the case have led some notable critics [1] to believe that Bruttius is himself a myth, or at least that the ascription to him of testimony that Domitilla was a Christian is a pious manufacture out of whole cloth by some enthusiastic Christian not very long before the time of Eusebius. On the other hand, equally enthusiastic Christians of modern days, indignant at such airy and flippant treatment of revered antiquity, have asseverated that Eusebius could not have been misled (and presumably no Christian of those centuries could justly be suspected of embroidering up an insufficient narrative?), and one recent

[1] Cf. H. Peter, *Historicorum Romanorum Reliquiae*, ii. pp. ccviii. f.

English writer[1] has even gone so far as to present us from the known family list (see the *Prosopographia Imperii Romani*) with a certain Bruttius Praesens who might, for all we know, have sat in the senate in Domitian's time, and have been an eye-witness of the facts he recorded, and have written history. All this is of course quite without evidential value, even corroborative. It is merely an agreeable historical diversion.

One circumstance is of significance. Eusebius is especially fond of making excerpts from his authorities, and of quoting their precise words. He does not do so in the case of the testimony from Bruttius, and that too in a matter upon which Eusebius lays great weight in his argument, and ascribes much importance to his source. If Eusebius could have quoted the actual words, it seems altogether likely that he would have done so. The conclusion is reasonable that he had probably never seen the actual text of Bruttius, but relied joyfully on some welcome report of it derived from some now unknown and probably Christian source. It is my opinion that, assumed the real existence of the chronographer, just as certain Christians of later date have found in the words even of Suetonius and of Dio (with a judicious use of interpretative imagination) "evidence" that both Clemens and Domitilla were Christians, so some eager Christian of the third century (or perhaps the second) interpreted a statement in Bruttius like that in Dio as really meaning that Domitilla was a Christian, and upon this sophisticated report Eusebius rested his affirmation.[2]

In Eusebius, then, two hundred years after the event, occurs the first and only extant intimation of a connection between the already alleged persecution

[1] He follows the highly imaginative Lanciani, in his *Pagan and Christian Rome*, p. 10, and before him De Rossi, in *Bull. Arch. Crist.*, 1865, and also calls this Bruttius "the friend of Pliny the Younger," while Lanciani had even spoken of him as Pliny's "illustrious friend." Those who know their Pliny will know that he nowhere mentions a Bruttius, and only once a Praesens.

[2] Did Iulius Africanus possibly come in here?

of Christians by Domitian and his slaughter of the aristocrats. And it is noticeable that even Eusebius, in claiming Domitilla as a Christian *teste Bruttio*, does not extend that claim to Clemens the consul. That was reserved for later and still more imaginative men. Evidently the Christian who (as I think most probable) foisted consciously or unconsciously upon "Bruttius" the statement that Domitilla was a Christian, had some prompting to his interpretation in record or tradition outside of such historical accounts as we have already examined, and some reason for not including Clemens in the same category, as we might naturally have expected him to do, the pagan account making in all probability no formal distinction at all in the cases against the two persons so closely related, and there being no conceivable motive for a pagan writer to set forth the case of Domitilla prominently above that of the equally noble and more famous Clemens.

How, then, did Domitilla come to be reputed as a Christian, and to be plainly discriminated from Clemens in this regard? Here archaeology comes to the assistance of the extremely scanty literary tradition, and helps us to answer both parts of the question, without our being driven to take refuge in the generally unsafe postulation of an unsupported purely oral tradition.

Certain mediaeval *Itineraries* of the city of Rome mention a cemetery of Domitilla (or the burial-place of Sts. Nereus and Achilles and of St. Petronilla) on the Via Ardeatina. It was more or less explored by Bosio in the last part of the sixteenth century, and a portion of it was freely accessible, and therefore freely plundered, throughout the most of the eighteenth century. The scientific examination of it dates from the middle of the nineteenth century.[1]

[1] Cf., *inter alia*, H. Marucchi, *Éléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, II., *Itinéraire des catacombes* (ed. 2, Paris, 1903), Livre I, chap. ii., pp. 97 ff., and works therein referred to.

It is established by inscriptions and other evidence that here on property belonging to Flauia Domitilla, granddaughter of Vespasian, was built the family burial-place of at least some of her connections among the Flavians, and in immediate conjunction therewith, doubtless by her express gift, was constructed a Christian cemetery, the earlier parts of which date back to the beginning of the second century. This cemetery appears to have continued in use, with successive extensions, till at least into the fourth century, and, as containing the tombs of martyrs, to have been visited for purposes of devotion much longer. It seems quite unlikely, if not impossible, that it should have been permitted in immediate connection with Domitilla's own family burial-place, and in her own probable lifetime, if she had not herself been a Christian. That inference from the archaeological evidence is stronger witness than any from the solitary affirmation in Eusebius on the alleged authority of a reported but unknown Bruttius.

It of course does not necessarily follow that Domitilla was already a Christian at the time of her exile by Domitian. She may have become so later, for her probable age would have made possible some decades of life in Rome after her (presumable) speedy recall in 96 by Nerva with the rest of the political exiles of Domitian's reign. But if this prominent Roman matron were known to have suffered on charges that directly or indirectly involved religion, and her memory were preserved in the Roman Church by the constant use of the cemetery that went by her name (and perhaps by other benefactions), it would not be strange that the halo of martyrdom (in the broad sense of the word common in antiquity) for the profession of Christ should gather about her name. About it also gathered a mass of legendary matter, beginning apparently as early as the latter half of the second century. Some of this appears to have been due to a

muddled tradition of facts (hence the story of the Domitilla, virgin niece of the consul Clemens), the rest to the operation of pious imagination. If her husband Clemens was also a Christian, memory of that fact would at any rate naturally fade away, because it had no tangible and lasting object, like Domitilla's grant of a cemetery, with which to connect and strengthen itself.

The discovery also of a Christian cemetery of later date centred about the family burial-place of the Acilii Glabriones has led to the conjecture or belief by some scholars that the Glabrio put to death by Domitian was also a Christian. This may be true, but it is not a reasonable inference from the extant archaeological evidence, which only goes to show that later members of his family had embraced the Christian faith; and there is no other evidence about the matter.

With regard to the question whether Flauius Clemens actually was a Christian, there is also neither literary nor archaeological evidence accessible. Evidently Bruttius, whenever he wrote—if there ever was such a writer—had no knowledge that either Clemens or Glabrio was a Christian; for if he had supposed it to be the case, he would (we may conjecture) have had as much motive to record it of them, or at any rate of Clemens, as of Domitilla; and Eusebius, or his immediate source for the report of Bruttius, would have been eager to add these two names of illustrious Romans to that solitary one of Domitilla. The late declaration by Syncellus that Clemens was a Christian is of no value whatever, since Syncellus had nothing to rest upon in that matter but Eusebius and his own imagination, in addition perhaps to a knowledge of Hermas, and more likely of the Clement-legend built up around the name of the reputed author of the letter of the Roman Church to the Corinthian.

The sweeping declaration by Orosius, early in the fifth century, that Domitian

"adventured to tear up from the roots the now established Church of Christ throughout all the world by issuing against her most cruel edicts of persecution," [1]

is no more worthy of serious attention than the many other of his unfounded and wildly rhetorical exaggerations. He was probably simply enlarging on the statement about "very many others" in Eusebius.

Thus, then, stands the whole of the Christian testimony, literary and archaeological, strong or weak, that is not purely legendary. At the best it is manifestly very slight. There is a statement from the second half of the second century, made without details by Melito, and repeated by Hegesippus and Tertullian, that Domitian was for a brief time a persecutor, or disposed to become so. Then, after the lapse of another century, there is the declaration in Eusebius, made professedly on pagan authority, that Domitilla "with very many others" suffered as a Christian under Domitian. Archaeology also indicates that Domitilla then or later was a Christian, not that she suffered as such. The statement in Eusebius about "very many others" is strikingly like that in Dio, and adds to the probability that the Christian reporter of Bruttius had merely found in him a remark that "very many others" were prosecuted like Domitilla on charges of "atheism." On the strength of Domitilla's reputation they are accordingly all reckoned as Christians by their unknown brother in the faith. At all events, this single, untraceable, and justly suspected phrase "with very many others" is the only evidence, pagan or Christian, of any considerable persecution of Christians by Domitian.

Naturally every possible attempt has been made to twist into support of it the statements in Dio and Suetonius. I can find reason only for amusement in the frantic notion of those writers who are so loyally confident of the tremendous social importance of

[1] Oros. *adu. Pag.* vii. 10. 1.

Christianity even in the pagan world of the first century, that they charge Dio with maliciously ignoring it, and in his account of the executions under Domitian with falsely and wilfully transferring to the Jewish faith that credit which he must have known belonged to Christianity.[1] It may be at once conceded that a charge brought by Domitian against Christians as such would probably have been based on the offence of "atheism," that is, the lack of conformity, especially in emperor-worship. But Jews and Judaisers would also be exposed to this charge, and it is altogether probable that many other citizens of the capital who were of the political opposition, but were neither Judaisers nor Christians, would lay themselves open to the same complaint by similar abstentions. The testimony of Dio cannot reasonably be impugned in its essence.

It has further been claimed that the characterisation of Clemens by Suetonius as a man *contemptissimae inertiae* fits the popular description of a Christian, and therefore that must have been the religion of Clemens —an assertion made concerning him by no responsible ancient author, pagan or Christian. But the Suetonian description would fit as well a Jew or a Judaiser; and in view of Domitian's deadly jealousy of men of high rank, doubtless many pagans also would try to find safety, so far as permitted, in modest lives of self-effacement. Even so, Clemens, like Glabrio, had been consul, and as such must even have "bowed in the house of Rimmon," a thing we must believe no Christian would do. It is idle to see in the remark of Suetonius any indication that Clemens was a Christian, and that means there is no evidence of it whatever. It is of course possible, but I have known hundreds of cases where a woman was a church-member and her husband was not.

[1] See also what is said in the chapter on the persecution by Nero (pp. 86 ff.) about the lack of mention of Christianity by Dio.

Two other pieces of evidence deserve careful attention. Suetonius, to judge from his single sentence concerning them, was not well disposed toward Christians, though he betrays no especial animosity against Jews. He records among Nero's virtuous and praiseworthy deeds that he put to death Christians, "a class of men devoted to a novel and baleful superstition."[1] If he had known that Domitian did the same, it is altogether probable that he would have recorded the fact, and have reckoned it to him also for righteousness. And Suetonius was apparently resident at Rome during at least the later years of Domitian's reign. He was intimately acquainted with a number of the leading men of the day. He had every opportunity to be acquainted on the spot with every detail of the legal processes of the Terror. Yet he nowhere mentions Christianity in connection with them.

The younger Pliny, a friend of Suetonius, was also resident in Rome at the time, and was a member of the senate. He was always scrupulously attentive to the discharge of all his official duties. He probably sat in his place in the senate when these trials were held. Yet some years later, writing to Trajan from Bithynia, he stated that he had never had anything to do with trials of Christians.[2] Apparently he also means that he had never witnessed any. The character of the questions that he proceeds to ask Trajan is in harmony with this understanding.

These two pieces of unconscious witness from Suetonius and Pliny are sufficient to confirm the conclusion, and almost sufficient to establish it independently, that Domitian in his prosecution of the aristocrats was not aiming any attack against Christianity; and though Domitilla, and possibly some of the other defendants (in all probability not Clemens), may have

[1] Suet. *Ner.* 16 *afflicti suppliciis Christiani, genus hominum superstitionis nouae et maleficae.*

[2] Plin. Ep. x. 96. 1 *cognitionibus de Christianis nunquam interfui.*

been actually Christians, the fact did not appear in the trials, and could not have been the formal basis of the charge against them. With this conclusion all the extant pagan testimony agrees, and it is unassailable.

What, then, was the germ of the second-century Christian statement that Domitian essayed to be a persecutor, which blossomed into the Eusebian affirmation that he definitely was so? In all probability the somewhat confused and inaccurate memory in the Roman Church of their illustrious fellow-member and great benefactress Domitilla, preserved alive by the continued use of her name attached to the property she had consecrated to the service of religion. It is possible also that the exile of St. John to Patmos, which must have been one of the isolated cases already conceded, and was in the second century ascribed to the reign of Domitian,[1] may, on account of the revered position and character of the last survivor of The Twelve, have contributed to the creation or preservation of the vague notion that Domitian had for a short time been a persecutor.

[1] Cf., *inter alia*, Iren. *adu. Haer.* v. 30. 3.

CHAPTER VII

THE PERSECUTION BY TRAJAN

SOMEWHERE about the year of grace 109 or 111, a very charming Roman gentleman whom we commonly know as the Younger Pliny was sent out from Rome to act as the emperor Trajan's deputy in the government of the united province of Pontus and Bithynia. This administrative district stretched well along the southern coast of the Black Sea. Rome had a way, such as Great Britain has pursued in later centuries, of getting hold of widely-flung territory in one fashion or another, and then governing it for its own good—and incidentally for the good of Rome. The United States of America has once or twice in recent years shown a disposition to follow such illustrious precedents of missionary effort. But dry-nursed peoples of this sort do not always, and did not even in ancient times, show proper appreciation of the benefits conferred upon them by their foreign masters. Bithynia (to call the double province by a single name) was in this case. There had been administrative troubles in that region. Just what they were we cannot well determine in detail. The countryside appears to have been quiet and well-behaved. The cities, as might be expected, were in less excellent condition. Difficulties in them were of two sorts, financial and political. They were in general permitted to enjoy local self-government, subject apparently to the intervention of the Roman legate whenever he deemed it

advisable to use his paramount authority. But now their finances were in bad shape. Mismanagement of public funds prevailed, and called for judicious mending. Pliny was a man of wide experience in financial matters, and that may have been the chief reason for his appointment by Trajan to this particular post. He was to examine the accounts of the various cities, investigate their past, present, and projected expenditures, put an end to "graft," try to make their budgets balance (as we might say), and in general use his authority to get things into good and comfortable running order.

Along with financial troubles in the Bithynian cities had gone, as might be expected, more or less political unrest. The precise complexion of it we cannot determine. Perhaps it had nothing to do with any revolutionary tendencies directed against the Roman domination. It may have been concerned entirely with local interests and conditions. But it appears to have existed. This must also be quieted, lest the disaffection break out into active disturbance and riot, which ultimately might compromise even the Roman suzerainty, and certainly would affect the well-being of resident Roman citizens and traders.

In the cities had been formed, as everywhere else in the Graeco-Roman world, private associations or clubs for various ostensibly non-political purposes. Common Roman names for these societies were *collegia*, *factiones*, or *sodalitates* ; the Greeks commonly called them ἑταιρίαι or θίασοι. In ordinary times of quiet, Rome had never troubled herself greatly about such organisations. But when there was reason to suspect or to fear political disaffection, she was wont to show very promptly that she had not forgotten their existence. They might be or become, whatever their professed purpose and apparent innocency of life, foci of political intrigue and conspiracy. On such

occasions Rome, as readers of the history of the later decades of the Roman Republic will remember, had the fashion of applying one very simple remedy. She did not undertake any detailed scrutiny of *collegia*, to determine which, if any, were likely to make trouble, and which were certainly harmless. She simply ordered the instant dissolution of all alike. Disobedience of this command exposed the individual member to the death-penalty.[1] Trajan followed in regard to Bithynia this time-honoured precedent. By the emperor's express direction his deputy, Pliny, apparently not long after his entrance into the province, ordered the disbanding of all *collegia* existing therein.

The rule of Pliny in Bithynia was of great importance for Pliny himself and doubtless for the province also. It happens, on account of one episode in it, to be of great interest for us. But it made not a ripple on the surface of contemporaneous or later political history. It is mentioned by no extant pagan writer. But on an inscription (apparently of the year A.D. 113)[2] that was set up on certain baths erected at Nouum Comum in accordance with Pliny's last will and testament, the fact of his governorship in Bithynia is commemorated. And further than that, a whole book of letters interchanged between Trajan and Pliny, chiefly while the latter was on service in Bithynia, was apparently compiled by some friend of Pliny's after the death of the governor himself, and finally appended as a tenth book to the collection of Pliny's miscellaneous correspondence. These nine books of *Letters* had been published in various groups by Pliny himself, and were more or less known in the centuries that followed. But the correspondence with Trajan remained, for all that we can see, unknown to all ancient and mediaeval writers (with a single notable exception), and was preserved for our reading in only

[1] See further on this matter of *collegia* pp. 52 ff.
[2] *CIL* v. 5262; Dessau *ILS* 2927; Wilmanns 1162.

a single manuscript, discovered in or near Paris at the very beginning of the sixteenth century.

But let us return to the one exception just mentioned. When that energetic and eloquent defender of the Christian faith, Tertullian, at the end of the second century after Christ addressed to Roman provincial governors the long open letter which became famous as the *Apologeticus*, he showed some knowledge of this correspondence of Pliny as governor of Bithynia with his chief, the emperor. For in the second chapter of his treatise Tertullian wrote :

"When Plinius Secundus was governor of a province, he punished some Christians by death and others by degradation [1]; but dismayed by their very number, he consulted Trajan, who was then emperor, as to what his procedure should be in the future, stating that except for their persistent refusal to sacrifice, he had discovered nothing else about their mysteries but meetings held before daybreak to sing to Christ and to God,[2] and to maintain a common rule of moral life, forbidding murder, adultery, fraud, treachery, and other crimes. Then Trajan wrote in reply that such people were not indeed to be hunted out, but if a presentment of them was made, they must be punished."

There is some reason for suspicion that Tertullian in this not perfectly accurate summary from Pliny's account may not have been quoting directly from the letters, but have been reproducing some other person's report of them.[3] Yet none of the other Christian apologists of the second century whose works are extant show any indication of a knowledge of Pliny's correspondence, nor indeed of any persecution of

[1] So we must probably understand *gradu pulsis*, as did Eusebius : but see my article, "Tertullian on Pliny's Persecution of Christians," in the *American Journal of Theology*, xxii. (1918), 124-35.

[2] We should perhaps read *ut* for *et*, "to Christ as a god"; for in this sense Eusebius read, in his translation of this passage from Tertullian, as did also Jerome, following Eusebius, and substantially thus also Pliny himself wrote (*Christo quasi deo*). Tertullian certainly used the phrase *de Christo ut deo* in *Apol.* 21.

[3] On this matter may be consulted my article, "Zur frühen Überlieferungsgeschichte des Briefwechsels zwischen Plinius und Trajan," in *Wiener Studien*, xxxi. (1909), 250-58.

Christians in Bithynia. Melito, Bishop of Sardis, in addressing Marcus Aurelius, affirmed that the Christian Churches had enjoyed unbroken peace and good reputation, so far as contacts with the civil power were concerned, ever since the time of Augustus, except for temporary troubles under Nero and Domitian. Evidently the Bithynian persecution had left no trace in memory after it, even among not far-distant Christian communities. Nor do any writers between Tertullian and Eusebius refer to it. But Eusebius embodies in his *Ecclesiastical History* (iii. 33 [129]) the account given by Tertullian, and appends a Greek translation of his actual words.[1] Eusebius had no other source for his narrative. Later writers all through the Middle Ages, when they mention the Bithynian affair, simply follow Eusebius, or Eusebius and Tertullian. It is therefore on the credit of Tertullian alone that Trajan is assigned a place among the imperial persecutors of the Church.

But when, in 1502, the last part of the book of Pliny's correspondence with Trajan was first published to the world in printed form, among the letters were found the two which Tertullian had cited. They were not allowed to pass without criticism. It was suggested, and even argued, that these two letters, if not the entire book, were nothing but a Christian forgery of late date, based on Tertullian alone. The doubt was absurd and quickly abandoned, though in our own day a writer has amused his readers (and perhaps himself) by a futile attempt to revive it.

The two letters (Plin. *Ep.* x. 96, 97), then, form our only source of knowledge concerning a persecution of Christians in Bithynia. They are an excellent source. We might indeed desire that Pliny had also given us a history of the rise and progress of Christianity in Bithynia and Pontus, and a statement of the

[1] He mentions the persecution also in his *Chronicles*, and Jerome follows him therein.

action that had been taken by Roman authorities against Christians in previous times and in other regions; but Pliny's account gives in due order and relation all the essential facts not already in Trajan's possession, and is clear, conscientious, and accurate. If it has frequently been misinterpreted, the trouble appears to the present writer to be chiefly due to the prepossessions with which it has been approached.

The two letters are very well known, but as they form the necessary text for much of the discourse that is to follow in this chapter, it will be convenient to translate them here:

PLINY TO TRAJAN

It is my custom, Sir, to refer to you all matters about which I am in doubt. For who can better solve my perplexity or inform my ignorance?

I have never been concerned in trials of Christians: consequently I do not know the precedents regarding the matter of punishment or the degree of the inquisition. I have been in no little doubt whether there is some discrimination made according to age, or whether the young are treated no differently from the older; whether reformation wins pardon, or it is of no avail to have abandoned the connection, if the defendant has ever been a Christian; whether the name itself, if unconnected with immorality, or the immorality linked with the name, is penalised.

Thus far my procedure in the case of persons charged before me with being Christians has been as follows. I asked them if they were Christians, and on their confession asked them a second and a third time, warning them of the death-penalty. As they persisted in pleading guilty, I ordered them to execution; for I did not doubt that whatever the character of that of which they pleaded guilty, their persistence and unyielding obstinacy certainly merited the punishment. There were others of like madness whom I noted to be sent to Rome, since they were Roman citizens.

Then, as frequently happens, the trouble spread by the treatment of it, and some different varieties came to notice. An anonymous written charge was laid before me containing the names of many persons. Some of these denied that they were or ever had been Christians. At my dictation they invoked

the gods, and did reverence with incense and wine to your image, which for this purpose I had ordered set up with the statues of the divinities, and also cursed Christ. None of these things, I am told, can those who are actually Christians be prevailed upon to do. I accordingly thought proper to set these persons free. Others who were named by the informer said they were Christians, and then said they were not; that they had been, indeed, but had given it up, some three years before, some a longer time, one or two even twenty years ago. All of these also did reverence to your image and the statues of the gods, and cursed Christ. They persisted in stating, however, that the whole of their fault, or indiscretion, was that they were wont to meet on a fixed day before sunrise, and to sing a hymn antiphonally to Christ as God, and to bind themselves by a sacred formula not to any criminal purpose, but to abstain from thefts and violence, from the commission of adultery, from the breaking of faith, from the refusal to surrender a deposit on demand; at the conclusion of these ceremonies their custom was to disperse, and to meet again for a meal, but of ordinary harmless food; and this last they had given up since the publication of my edict, in which, according to your instructions, I put private associations under ban. Accordingly I thought it the more needful to inquire into the truth by putting to torture two serving-women that they called deaconesses; but I found nothing further than a foolish and extravagant form of belief.

Hence I adjourned court-proceedings to apply to you for counsel; for the case seemed a proper one for consultation, particularly on account of the number of the accused. For many persons of all ages, of every rank, of both sexes, are already charged, and will be; and the infection of this foreign cult has spread not merely through the cities, but through the villages, and even the country-side. But I think it can be checked and cured. It is certain that temples which were wellnigh abandoned have begun to be thronged once more, and the customary services resumed that were long time interrupted, and fodder for the victims finds a sale, of which scarce a single purchaser could earlier be discovered. From this it is easy to judge what a throng of people could be reformed, if there is opportunity for repentance conceded.

Trajan to Pliny

You have acted with perfect propriety, my dear Secundus, in determining the cases of those who have been cited before

you as Christians. For no general determination can be made, which can establish a set form of procedure. They are not to be ferreted out. If they are charged and convicted, they are to be punished; yet with the provision that, if any one says he is not a Christian, and establishes the fact to a certainty, that is, by invoking our gods, no matter what the suspicions about his past, he is to win immunity by his repentance. Anonymous charges ought not to find recognition in any case: they are of very objectionable precedent, contrary to the spirit and practice of our era.

We cannot tell when Christianity was first introduced into the regions now under Pliny's jurisdiction. It will be remembered that St. Paul on his second great missionary journey had desired to go to Bithynia and preach the Gospel, but had been forbidden by "the spirit of Jesus" (Acts xvi. 7). Yet not very many years later St. Peter, in addressing his letter to the faithful of the Dispersion in districts north of Taurus, specifically included the dwellers of that class in Pontus and Bithynia (1 Peter i. 1). Evidently by that time it was commonly known that Christian communities were established in those regions. But how large the Christian population was, it is impossible to estimate, nor can we say what were its chief centres. We might reasonably suppose the new religion to have been more firmly established in the cities than in the country. Yet Pliny represents it as having already penetrated in his day to the villages and the country-side, and its seductive influence to have been so great that temples were wellnigh deserted and sacrifices intermitted. Whether this could have been true of the whole province, or even of any part of it in the degree specified, may be doubtful. The governor is probably relying on the exaggerated statements of persons interested in persuading him to take severe action against the new sect, on the ground that public tranquillity required it. Among the complainants may have been resident Jews as well as pagan priests, and in all prob-

ability there were not missing those traders who had profited by the sale of fodder for the victims whose destined end was to feed the altars.[1] Pliny was apparently writing at the moment from somewhere about the centre or eastern part of his province, since the correspondence with Trajan appears to be arranged in chronological order, and a letter shortly before this (x. 92) concerned Amisus and one immediately after it (x. 98) Amastris. But the trials referred to in the first part of the letter to Trajan about the Christians may have been distributed over a considerable area. There is nothing that can help us to assign any precise locality to any of the cases.

That Trajan attached the greatest importance to the strict enforcement of the edict commanding the dissolution of all private *collegia* in the province may be seen from his reply to Pliny on two occasions. The large and important city of Nicomedia had been devastated by a great conflagration. The city had no public provision for fire-protection. Since the edict against private associations had apparently already been promulgated, Pliny asked the emperor whether he might not make an exception to it by authorising the organisation there of a carefully supervised volunteer fire-company of not to exceed one hundred and fifty men (x. 33). Trajan declined to grant the permission, on the ground that past events in the province showed that societies, for whatever innocent or useful purpose formed and however carefully supervised, would be sure to degenerate shortly into *hetaeriae* like the others by which the province and city had been plagued. Amisus had the rank in the Roman empire not of a subjugated possession, but of a "free and allied state." Yet even this did not liberate it entirely from the jurisdiction of the governor of the province in which it was situated.

[1] The disturbances aroused by the preaching of St. Paul in Philippi and Ephesus will be remembered (Acts xvi. 16 ff.; xix. 23 ff.).

The Amiseni had a long-standing custom about certain common meals. It apparently antedated the Roman "alliance," and its preservation was specifically provided for in the treaty with Rome. But a common meal was to the Roman mind the most patent characteristic of a *collegium*. Accordingly, since Trajan had been so strenuously opposed to the continuance in Bithynia of anything that looked like a *collegium*, Pliny felt bound to ask the emperor whether this privilege of common meals at Amisus was to be continued or should be abrogated (x. 92). Trajan replied justly that if a matter covered specifically by treaty were in question, it could not be abrogated by administrative action (presumably not without denouncing the treaty). But he showed his dislike for such things by warning Pliny that the continued privilege must not be made a cloak for public disturbance or unlicensed meetings, and that in no communities fully subject to Roman rule was any such thing to be tolerated under any pretext whatever. It is very evident that no persons who should set at defiance Trajan's inhibition of *collegia* in Bithynia might look to him for condonation of their disobedience.

Jewish synagogue-associations doubtless did not fall under the proclaimed ban, because of the continued special privileges granted the Jews (cf. p. 43). But the Christians were in different case. Whatever might be the confused notion of them earlier and elsewhere, that reckoned them merely as a sect of the Jews, there is no reason to suppose that it prevailed still in Bithynia any more than in the province of Asia (cf. p. 97). The Christians could not be regarded as sharing in the special privileges conceded to the Jews. They were amenable to the law in every particular. And their *ecclesiae* were in the eye of the law mere *collegia* like any other. They were organised associations, with officers, contributions to a common chest,

regular meetings for corporate purposes, and especially they shared at fixed intervals in a common meal, the sure mark of a *collegium*.

For apparently somewhat more than a year before Pliny communicated with his chief on the subject, the Christian Churches in Bithynia had been proscribed under the terms of the prohibitory edict regarding *collegia* of whatever description. How they had conducted themselves in the interval we can but guess, except that a little information is contained in Pliny's summary of the results of his inquiries. Weak-kneed brethren probably took shelter from the threatening storm by obeying the edict and withdrawing from the association. Some of these the governor appears to have encountered in the course of his investigation. Other members of bolder courage preferred to obey God rather than man.[1] Yet some at least of the Churches thought it not inconsistent with their duty to abandon the joint meal, which, as already remarked, would be the most commonly recognised characteristic of a *collegium*, or, as Pliny in this Greek-speaking province calls it, a *hetaeria*. This meal was doubtless the evening love-feast (*ἀγάπη*) : for it is hardly conceivable that they would suspend the celebration of the Eucharist, and that, moreover, would have taken place at the early morning meeting, of which the backsliders spoke.

Up to a short time before the writing of the letter Pliny apparently had been forced to deal with only a comparatively few cases of Christians. These were all of one sort. The culprits were of the faithful who had openly disobeyed the edict as a matter of conscience, and were prepared to stand by their principles in the face of certain death. It is interesting to note that in this first series of trials (if it may so be called) Pliny appears to have known nothing of Christians except that certain of the prohibited *collegia* called

[1] Cf. Tert. *Apol.* 45 *deum non proconsulem timentes.*

themselves by that name.[1] He accordingly acted as he would have done (and probably did, if other recalcitrant *collegiales* were arraigned before him—a matter of which we know nothing) in the case of any lawbreakers of other societies. He asked them if they were members of the Christian *hetaeria*. They promptly said they were. There is no indication of any exception to the uniform rule of confession, and if these defendants were, as seems likely, bold and notorious contraveners of the edict, we should not expect that any would now deny their allegiance. But if they replied to the governor's question with anything more than a simple affirmation, Pliny does not mention it to Trajan, since it would be irrelevant to the process. The issue was perfectly simple. *Hetaeriae* had been specifically interdicted, and persons who retained membership in them after the issuance of the edict were subject to the death-penalty. The repeated interrogation (probably conducted at intervals with adjournments between whiles to permit the accused to take counsel with themselves and with one another[2]) had only one end in view. The procedure in a *cognitio* apparently followed in this respect that in the more formal *iudicium*. A defendant who pleaded guilty was condemned on his own confession, without the introduction of evidence for or against him.[3] Pliny must

[1] This is not at all an improbable supposition, unless to those who believe that certain of the State trials at Rome under Domitian were of persons charged with being Christians (on which see pp. 164 ff.), or are convinced that because Christianity was such an important thing to Christians, it must by this time have come to the attention and knowledge of every intelligent Roman. This latter was certainly not the view of Tacitus (see pp. 90 ff., 96 ff.).

[2] Cf. later usage, as in the case of the martyrs of Scili: *Passio Sanctorum Scilitanorum* 11 ff. *Saturninus proconsul dixit: numquid ad deliberandum spatium uultis? . . . moram triginta dierum habete et recordemini.* Such adjournments had nothing to do with the *comperendinationes* provided for in case of criminal prosecutions in a *iudicium* at Rome.

[3] Seuerus later ruled very reasonably otherwise: cf. Ulpian in *Dig.* xlviii. 18. 1. 17 *diuus Seuerus rescripsit confessiones reorum pro exploratis facinoribus haberi non oportere, si nulla probatio religionem cognoscentis instruat* (and in the same chapter §§ 23 and 27 on evidence procured by torture). This ruling is incorporated in the *Digest* from Ulpian's (now lost) work *De officio proconsulis*, and evidently pertains to *cognitiones* conducted by provincial governors. Indeed, the procedure by *cognitio* may by this time have entirely supplanted that by *iudicium*.

have been puzzled by the uniform readiness with which the accused confessed their guilt. Men were not usually so eager to embrace death. So he took pains to explain to them the serious condition in which their plea of guilty left them. If they persisted in it, he had only one course open to him. He could not acquit them; he could not even entertain evidence that might at least tend toward extenuation of their guilt; he could only condemn the aliens to death and send the Roman citizens to the capital for probable condemnation and execution there. But if they would only change their plea to not guilty, evidence must be produced to prove the case against them, and evidence in their favour must also be heard. The governor was free to attach such value to all this evidence as he saw fit. If he thought the case not proven, or that sufficient extenuating circumstances appeared, he had the power to acquit the accused. He could even show this mercy at his discretion in the very face of conclusive evidence of guilt. To give the defendants this possible loophole of escape, and to urge their acceptance of it, was the humane purpose of Pliny in the successive adjournments of the cases, and in his explanations to the accused.

There has frequently been some misapprehension of Pliny's action, because readers have projected backward over these earlier cases at Pliny's judgement-seat the legal conditions that prevailed after Trajan's moderate rescript. From that time on, what we call recantation or abjuration by an accused Christian was all that was necessary to ensure his acquittal. But at this time recantation could have no legal effect. It was only as if a murderer might say, "I killed the man, indeed, but I will not act so again." Pliny accordingly does not urge recantation, though he does urge the change of a plea of guilty to a *pro forma* plea of not guilty, but this only for the reasons mentioned above. But the accused persisted in their former plea, despite

Pliny's most patient and well-meant endeavours. It was one of those hopeless instances of mutual misunderstanding that so often confront us in the observation of the contacts between pagan and Christian. Neither could comprehend the view-point of the other. Each was thoroughly conscientious. To Pliny it could not mean even a false profession for the accused to deny that he was a Christian. This would appear to him merely tantamount to saying, "I avail myself of my privilege to demand a hearing on the evidence." That is precisely what it often is understood to mean in a modern court. But to the Christian who stood before Pliny's tribunal, to deny that he was a Christian was to deny Him who had so solemnly pronounced, "He that denieth me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven." So the governor was forced to pass the only sentence open to him under the circumstances, and the Christians went to their doom.

Pliny's remark to Trajan about the persistence of the Christians in pleading guilty must not be misunderstood. He says, "I did not doubt that whatever the character of that of which they pleaded guilty, their persistence and unyielding obstinacy certainly merited the punishment." That does not indicate any petulance or impatience of spirit on the part of the governor. He simply means that quite irrespective of the intrinsic character of the Christian association (of which he had learned something more before he wrote this sentence), the persistent and unrepentant attitude of the accused was but a reiterated declaration of their defiant disobedience of the edict, and established beyond a shadow of doubt their legal guilt.

But while the governor was quite justified in this statement (and Trajan definitely approved his action), one can imagine that the cases—all alike as they were—must have left an uncomfortable feeling in his sensitive mind.

Then came what we may call the second phase of the incident. No longer were there merely a few scattered cases of members of the forbidden *hetaeria* brought before him, but his court was flooded with charges against those alleged to be Christians. The accused were of every rank in society, *honestiores* as well as *humiliores* (or *tenuiores*), of all ages, of both sexes. Their very number filled him with dismay. He was led to investigate the character of the peculiar association. From the Christian side he learned much through questioning the multitude of his prisoners; for with his usual, though here certainly misplaced, conscientiousness and diligence he felt bound to take into custody even the many who were named in an anonymous communication. But from other than Christian sources he learned something else. Up to this time it appears, as I have remarked above, that he had known nothing about even the Christian name except that it was the accepted designation of members of certain now forbidden societies in Bithynia. He was now informed [1] that action against Christians as such (apparently quite irrespective of the question of forbidden *hetaeriae*) had been taken by Roman authorities elsewhere. This demanded further investigation. Trajan was continually instructing him that his administration should be guided by precedents established in his own province, or where these were not available, by those of similar neighbouring provinces. There appeared to be no Bithynian precedents in the matter of the treatment of Christians. But it might well be that some general principle of procedure against Christians had been established elsewhere by Roman authority (as his informants suggested), which should henceforth supersede that special principle on which he had thus far been acting, which rested on

[1] This was probably by men who had been invited by him in the usual order to hear the cases with him as his assessors (*consilium*). They would naturally not be the same men as those who had served on the *consilium* elsewhere at the first series of trials.

the local outlawry of all private associations. On that point he must consult the emperor for information and instruction. Meanwhile he would hold accused Christians in custody, but would postpone the actual passing of judgement upon them.

In his letter to Trajan Pliny assumes the probable accuracy of the information given him that there was an established mode of generally recognised Roman procedure against Christians as such, independent of any question about locally forbidden *hetaeriae*. He asks nothing about the grounds on which it rests, but only practical questions that would concern his administration under it. What punishments are inflicted? Is the governor bound, as in the case of other malefactors, to search out Christians, or is he to consider only such cases as are duly presented before him by private prosecutors? Are the young to be less severely punished than the older? If a person has once been a member of the Christian society, but has withdrawn from it, may he be on that account discharged without penalty? Is mere membership in the society penalised, or may a member be acquitted, if it can be proved that he has not personally been guilty of such criminal acts as those with which the society is popularly charged?

It is evident that none of these questions could have arisen in Pliny's mind under the circumstances of the first series of trials. They would not have been in point, when the issue was merely that of membership in a forbidden society. For that crime there was but one penalty, and the only question could be whether the accused had or had not been a member since the issuance of the edict.

In the first series of trials there had been no difficulty in determining the guilt of the defendants. They had, without exception, immediately and persistently declared that they were Christians. But in this second series of trials new conditions confronted the judge.

Some of the accused denied that they were Christians. Hereupon Pliny's recent advisers came to the rescue. They assured him that the experience of Roman officials elsewhere had led to the formulation of an infallible test by which it could be absolutely determined whether the defendant was telling the truth in denying his membership in the society. Let the governor require him to sacrifice to the Roman gods by dropping some grains of incense and a little wine upon a fire burning before their statues, and to utter an insulting formula against Christ. It was certain that if he did this, he was not a Christian; if he refused to do it, he certainly was a Christian. Pliny applied this test, and apparently felt perfect confidence in the validity of its results. It should be observed that he did not employ it now, as it was frequently employed (and perhaps by him also) after Trajan's rescript, as a formula of recantation. He was not concerned at this stage to procure recantation. That could not now affect the legal issue. He applied it merely to determine whether the respondent actually was or was not a Christian at the time when the test was proffered. To be sure, there was yet another question of importance remaining to be decided. The accused might prove to the satisfaction of the governor that he was not now a Christian. But if he had been a member of the Christian society since the promulgation of the edict, he was guilty of the fatal disobedience. It must be strictly inquired whether he ever had been a Christian, and if so, when he had withdrawn from the association. Only after his innocence in this particular had been established could he be justly acquitted.

Accordingly in the report of his proceedings to Trajan Pliny distinguishes different classes (*plures species*) of defendants. Doubtless among the accused must have been some who at once acknowledged their membership, as those had done who were arraigned in the first series of trials. But of these confessors

Pliny makes no mention. Of those who denied their guilt one class was composed of persons who upon examination declared that they were not Christians and never had been. They readily took the proffered test, and appear to have convinced the governor of the truth of their protests regarding their past history. These prisoners he accordingly acquitted on the spot. The other class was more difficult to deal with. They had said at first that they were Christians, but later denied it, and proved their after-assertion by taking the test. Presumably on being asked why, then, they had at first said they were Christians, they replied that it was because they had once been so. To this temporary contradiction in their pleas Pliny apparently attributes no importance. He may have recognised that there might have been some misapprehension in the interrogatory. That would be natural enough in the case of persons frightened by being suddenly accused of a capital offence. But, at any rate, the discrepancy could make no certain difference in their status before the law, and therefore he does not dwell upon it. Of their present freedom from membership in the proscribed society he is assured by the result of the test; of their past record in that matter he must inform himself. Some had certainly been members since the date of the edict. Others affirmed that their membership had ceased full three years ago. Some had withdrawn earlier yet, at least one of them even twenty years before. Of the truthfulness of these declarations about time Pliny expresses no opinion. He mentions it merely to indicate that if their membership had lapsed so long before, they might be assumed to have outgrown all probable trace of attachment to their former ties, and might be trusted to tell him with truth and without reluctance about the character of the Christian *hetaeria*.

For into that question Pliny now thought it necessary to enter. His advisers, who had called to his attention

the possible existence in the realm of an accepted standing principle and mode of procedure against Christians, and of a test by which they might be detected, had apparently given him another piece of important information. If what they told him of public report elsewhere was not mere gossip, he had to do here with no commonplace *hetaeria* that under ordinary circumstances would have been tolerated without question, and was being proceeded against now only because of the special edict against all private associations in Bithynia. Christians were said by his informants to have the repute of forming no innocent and inoffensive association, but one of extreme secrecy, in the meetings of which most horrible and revolting crimes were practised.[1] Into these charges it was certainly the governor's duty to look.

An opportunity for the collection of unbiased and well-informed testimony was offered by the arraignment of these persons who had withdrawn from the Christian society. Their evidence was all to the same effect. Pliny must have been somewhat surprised by it. It tended to show that the Christian league was one organised, as far as ethics were concerned, for the practice and propagation of virtue rather than of vice. As to the character of their common meal (which, as before said, was the most invariable mark to the Roman mind of a *hetaeria*) Pliny seems to have made especially strict inquiry, since the Christians were popularly charged with celebrating cannibalistic feasts.[2] His prisoners assured him unanimously that the food was of the most simple and ordinary kind.

Pliny was never inclined to believe the worst of his fellow-men, but the best (except perhaps in the one

[1] On the crimes popularly charged against Christians see p. 77.

[2] It seems quite possible that this charge, which appears to have been widespread by the middle of the second century, had its origin at a period when the ἀγάπη and the Eucharist had not been thoroughly differentiated in character or in hour of observance, and some perverted report of the Eucharist got abroad to the effect that the Christians at their secret repast ate the flesh and drank the blood of some person.

case of Regulus). He probably welcomed this evidence of the lofty character of the Christian society. But it was so contrary to his expectation that he did not give it full credence without further examination. Among his multitude of prisoners he found two women whom he selected for special questioning. It may be presumed that they were among those who had confessed their membership. Pliny says they were *ancillae*, called by the Christians *ministrae*. This word *ministrae* appears to be merely a natural Latin translation by Pliny of the Greek διακόνισσαι, which was their ecclesiastical title. They were "deaconesses." But Pliny misinterpreted this to mean that they were slaves of the corporation.[1] They would therefore have served at its common meals, and might be expected to be less reluctant to betray the character of them than persons would be who were not slaves acting under orders, but members sharing the actual responsibility for what took place.[2] The two women were put to the torture.[3] But even so the governor extracted from them nothing that was inconsistent with what he had already heard. He was evidently convinced that this was the truth, and there was no reason for altering the charge to something more serious from a moral point of view than that of membership in a forbidden *hetaeria*. It was on this line that the prosecutions had been initiated; it was to this that they now reverted; the side investigation into the hidden character of this one recalcitrant society was a temporary

[1] But cf. p. 54 on this matter. A similar misapprehension on his part of another ecclesiastical term appears in his taking *sacramentum* (or the Greek word which he thus translates) to mean an oath.

[2] At least at a later date slaves were not permitted to bear witness against their masters except in cases of adultery, of false census-returns, or of treason (*Dig.* 48. 18. 1. 16; *Cod.* 9. 41. 1); but slaves of a municipality or of a corporation might, even long before Ulpian's time, be examined under torture in capital cases affecting a citizen of the municipality or a member of the corporation (*Dig.* 48. 18. 1. 7).

[3] Under Roman law persons of the higher status (*honestiores*), including Roman citizens, were not subjected to torture in legal examination; persons of the lower status (*humiliores* or *tenuiores*) were but exceptionally put to torture, if they were freemen; but the testimony of slaves was commonly, if not regularly, aken under torture.

diversion prompted by the information that the Christians were suspected of being an actively criminal organisation of a horrible type. That Pliny still considered disobedience to the edict the sole *gravamen* in the process is evident not merely from the whole course of his account, but specifically from his especial mention of the evidence that upon the publication of the edict the Christians had given up their common meal.[1] Since this was generally regarded as the most essential characteristic of a *hetaeria*, he seems in his disposition toward mercy to incline to the charitable thought that the relinquishment might be constructively ruled to be equivalent in law to the dissolution of the organisation.

But the question was not for the moment a practical one, since he felt bound to adjourn all proceedings until he could learn from the emperor whether they ought to take a new direction altogether, and be based on that general legislation, or at least principle and precedent of action, against Christians as such, which his informants assured him had been established elsewhere in the Roman world. Meanwhile he would of course retain in custody all his prisoners, including apparently those also who had once been Christians, though they were so no longer.

[1] Some modern writers have contended that this statement of the renegades referred only to their own action and not at all to that of the Church. But this view seems quite untenable. The renegades themselves had done more than this: they had abandoned the Church altogether, as they proved by taking the test. If it be imagined that they said they at first withdrew from sharing in the common meal, and later surrendered even their membership in the society (their notion being that this earlier partial obedience to the edict might be considered in some measure to palliate their guilt in retaining their formal membership for some time thereafter), it is pertinent to remark that this individual action would not seem important enough to Pliny to be reported to his master, especially as an interpolation into the account of the proceedings of the society as a body. It is with this, and not with the conduct of individual members, that the governor is here concerned. It should also be noted that unless the specific charge against the prisoners was that of membership in a forbidden *hetaeria*, there would be no point at all in the statement. Moreover, if the accused were speaking only of their own personal action, one would expect Pliny to make that clear by writing *quod se ipsos facere desisse*, or the like. Of course it is not in the slightest degree incredible that the Christians should have intermitted the love-feast. Churches at this period considered it right to avoid danger, if it could be done without sacrifice of principle.

Pliny's disposition to make out the best case possible for the Christians is evident throughout his report. He emphasises the details that would appeal to such a practical administrator as Trajan was. The argument (for it was an argument, though framed with skilful deference) is thoroughly Roman. "The religious belief of the Christians is to be sure a fond and vain thing, but they themselves are a harmless and well-disposed folk in every respect except in their foolish unwillingness to worship our gods; they are indeed better than harmless, since they train their members in virtuous living; the popular rumours about them are nothing but slanders; they have obediently ceased from their common meal since the proclamation of the edict, and presumably might therefore be construed in the eye of the law to have dissolved their association; our prisoners are already very many in number, and if things go on as at present, they will be many more; to put to death for what might be called after all only a constructive crime, multitudes of well-intentioned people of every age, sex, and station, looks like unnecessary cruelty; our severity thus far shows signs of having produced a favourable effect; its practical purpose has already been accomplished; a judicious leniency now following upon it might work wonders."

This disposition of the governor toward mercy is indicated also by the specific questions of detail that he asks concerning the postulated principle and precedents of action recognised elsewhere against Christians. If there are any ways by which he may show clemency without violating his plain duty, he is anxious to know them.

Trajan's answer to Pliny is, like all his rescripts, brief and to the point. He wastes no time over matters that he would consider unessential to the purpose of practical direction. He says that there is and can be no principle laid down of Roman procedure against Christians in general. (This manifestly disposes

of the modern notion that there was in recognised existence anything like the falsely understood *institutum Neronianum* discussed in the preceding chapter.) On the other hand, Pliny's specific procedure in Bithynia has been correct in every particular except in the entertainment of anonymous denunciations. As regards possible relaxation of severity, the ban can no more be lifted from the Christian society than from any other. *Hetaeriae* must remain prohibited in Bithynia. If Christians are duly presented before the governor's court and duly convicted of being Christians, they must suffer the penalty. *But*—and instead of being a very little "but," as some modern scholars have thought, it is a very large "but" indeed—in the case of Christians the governor is relieved of the duty ordinarily incumbent upon him of searching out malefactors. He is to do nothing against Christians *proprio motu*. He is to entertain no charges that concern them, unless the charges are laid before him in formal manner by a private prosecutor who stands ready to assume the responsibility of proving his case by the submission of testimony. And if any defendant denies that he is a Christian, and substantiates his denial by taking the test, he is to be acquitted without further inquisition. No regard is to be paid to his possible affiliations in the past. His immunity in that respect is complete. This is the utmost limit of possible concession.

Trajan's ruling is almost amusing by the deftness with which he retains his cherished edict against *hetaeriae* in Bithynia without the slightest formal modification, and yet manages to put into his deputy's hands the power to free this one association almost entirely from the hard terms of its operation. The rescript was altogether more lenient than Pliny had dared to ask, or had any probable expectation or hope of winning. We may imagine the deep pleasure and satisfaction with which he read it. It must have led

at once to the release from custody of probably every Christian prisoner that he had been holding: for it is hardly likely that any of them had been arraigned in the formal manner that by the emperor's instructions was alone to be recognised. And it is doubtful whether thereafter during Pliny's term there were many Christians brought before him. Perhaps there were none at all. The reluctance of the governor to entertain charges against Christians would doubtless become known, and a hostile judge could make it very hard, if not impossible, for a private prosecutor to prove his case to the satisfaction of the judge. And if he could not prove it to the professed satisfaction of that unsympathetic and autocratic official, there was always hanging over the prosecutor the threatening possibility of a counter-suit for *calumnia*, which might under these unfriendly circumstances have for him very unpleasant consequences. It appears probable that few persons would wish to undertake prosecutions in such unfavourable conditions, and that, if they did venture it, few, if any, would succeed in bringing their attempts to a prosperous issue.

It is true that neither the rescript of Trajan nor the persecution in Bithynia is mentioned by any extant ancient writer except Tertullian and the Christians from Eusebius onward whose accounts rest back ultimately on Tertullian alone. But the rescript had in one especial point a very wide-sweeping influence on official action throughout the entire Roman realm during the rest of the century. Its influence extended, indeed, beyond the limit of the second century, but that matter lies beyond the scope of this group of essays. After Trajan's time the hostility against Christians tended to formulation in charges of constructive treason based on their unwillingness to worship the national deities, including, of course, the *genius* of the emperor. But from any such charge an accused Christian anywhere in the realm (the alleged

exceptions are rather apparent than real) could free himself by taking such a test as Pliny applied and Trajan officially approved. It will be observed that in his rescript Trajan did not speak of any abjuration that was to include the formal cursing of Christ. We may perhaps reasonably judge that the moderate emperor saw no reason for prescribing more than the act of worship, which might well seem to him less offensive to the feelings of the accused than the cursing, and quite as effective for a test. And as a fact, suspected or actually confessed Christians after his day do not appear to have been often required *Christo maledicere*. They were, however, sometimes called upon to prove their loyalty by swearing by the *genius* of the reigning emperor. This the faithful naturally would refuse to do, since the concept of the *genius* ranked the *genius Caesaris* among heathen deities, whom it were idolatry to recognise even in this way. But on the other hand they were willing to swear by the emperor's well-being (*salus*), since this form of the oath had for them no such connotation.[1]

Certain scholars have contended that the specific crime for which the Bithynian Christians were arraigned could not have been that of membership in a forbidden *hetaeria*. They all belong, I think, to the ranks of those who hold that Christians stood already condemned by Roman use and wont, if not by specific Roman legislation, as outlaws and brigands, enemies of the human race, who were to be put to summary death whenever and wherever they could be caught. With the theory of the existence of any such *institutum Neronianum* I have already dealt sufficiently. Of course, with such a belief already established in their minds, the critics of whom I speak could not possibly

[1] See Tert. *Apol.* 32; and on the whole question of required oaths by the emperor's *genius* (τύχη) or *salus* (σωτηρία or ὑγιεία), Mommsen, *Staatsrecht*,[3] ii. 809 f. It is doubtful whether in reality *salus Caesaris* was not taken by the Roman mind in quite as concrete a sense as *genius Caesaris*, though the Christian made a distinction between them.

accept any other way of accounting for these Bithynian cases. It would wreck their whole system. It is probable, however, that they have none of them analysed Pliny's account in the manner attempted in the preceding pages, but have followed instead some interpretation that left manifest difficulties unsolved. By none have the arguments against the possibility of the *hetaeria* theory been more zealously and fully set forth than by Sir William M. Ramsay, and perhaps I can do no better than to consider them here in the order in which he has summarised them.[1]

In the first place, Sir William Ramsay opines that if the charge were one of membership in a forbidden *hetaeria*, Pliny would be acting illegally by not putting some questions on the point to the prisoners, and going through a longer form of trial. To this it may be answered that we do not know to how much questioning he subjected his prisoners, for he does not tell us. We do know that he asked them the one crucial question, whether they were Christians, and they (presumably promptly) said they were. That is, he asked them to plead to the charge, and they pleaded guilty. This was the only question and answer that he deemed it necessary to report to Trajan, since it was the only one that strictly concerned the issue. If they persisted in their plea, he had no other course open to him than to pronounce sentence on their confession alone. There was not the slightest taint of illegality in this procedure. In his footnote Sir William actually concedes the legal point which he denies in his context—unless, indeed, he fancies that this was a *iudicium* and not a *cognitio*.

Again, Sir William says that Pliny would not have asked Trajan how to treat the accused, if they were arraigned as members of a forbidden *hetaeria*, since Trajan's mind regarding *hetaeriae* had been abundantly made clear by earlier rescripts. But I have pointed

[1] In his *Church in the Roman Empire*, pp. 214 f.

out above that these questions arose in Pliny's mind at a later time than that of the first series of trials, and were based on the putative existence of some general imperial procedure against Christians as such, which perhaps ought to supersede his local action against them as forming a proscribed *hetaeria*. Under this general procedure Pliny trusts that there may be some possibilities of showing mercy. As concerns the matter of Trajan's inflexibility of temper, I imagine that Pliny had a better opinion and a truer judgement of Trajan's humanity than has Sir William Ramsay. Trajan certainly did relax *something* in favour of the Christians. Sir William is certain that the emperor would never have given Pliny the chance to set free a single person, however virtuous his life and however good his intentions, who had been guilty of what was at most a strictly legal delict; but on the other hand Sir William must (according to his own theory) believe that Trajan was perfectly willing to see Pliny turn loose upon society persons already condemned as outlaws, bandits, creatures " to be hunted down like wild beasts," alleged perpetrators of horrible enormities. I, on the other hand, think Trajan would be far more likely to open a way toward mercy for people of the first class, in so far as it could be done without actual withdrawal of the edict against *hetaeriae*. That is not only what I should think consonant with Trajan's character; it is also precisely what I think the careful analysis of the interchanged letters shows he did.

But, in the third place, Sir William Ramsay says (apparently as pertinent to the claim that the accused were not charged with membership in a forbidden *hetaeria*) that the Christians " had of their own accord [!] given up a weekly meeting and a common meal, which would have constituted them a *sodalitas*." Hereupon a little *caveat* may be filed: for if by the weekly meeting, which he appears to distinguish from the common meal, Sir William means the morning

worship, there is no indication that the Christians had surrendered that; otherwise Pliny would have written *quae ipsa* instead of *quod ipsum*; and it is perhaps hardly correct juridically to say that the meeting and meal "would have constituted them a *sodalitas*" (that would be effected by their compact), though these facts would undoubtedly be taken as *prima facie* evidence that the participants formed a *sodalitas*. But as regards the main point, Sir William evidently overlooked the fact that the surrender of the common meal did not come to the governor's knowledge until after the first series of punishments and the later series of arraignments, and therefore could not have affected the charges. That is surely sufficient answer to his objection. But my analysis of the letter of course shows that after this and the accompanying disclosures, Pliny contemplated a possible change in the indictment.

And finally, in his last objection Sir William Ramsay declares that Trajan was so set against *sodalitates* that he "would not . . . have ordered Pliny to abstain from seeking out the Christians, if he had understood them to be a *sodalitas*." Here again is the conclusion based on mind-reading, and it may be answered only in the way it has been answered just above. I cannot believe that Trajan would more readily see mercy extended to outlaws and bandits than to members of a Christian *hetaeria* of the unique, actively virtuous, character described by Pliny. It will of course be remembered that Trajan does not authorise the revocation or suspension of the edict; he simply permits the administration of it to be tempered in certain cases by discretion and mercy. That would appear to be a plainly sensible and humane thing to do, and worthy of a Trajan. How can he be justly charged with having a less judicious and gentle temper?

CHAPTER VIII

THE RESCRIPT OF HADRIAN

As a sort of appendix to the discussion of Trajan's rescript regarding the prosecution of Christians may be briefly considered an order purporting to have been issued on the same topic some dozen years later by his successor, Hadrian. This emperor's rescript was addressed to Minicius Fundanus, then governor of the province of Asia. How its actual text came to be published we cannot tell; but there seems to be no valid reason for believing, as some scholars have done, that all imperial rescripts were regarded as of so sacred and confidential a character that they must invariably have been preserved only in secret archives. At all events, this rescript (if genuine) did become known; for only about a quarter of a century after it was written, a Christian apologist, Justin Martyr, saw fit to conclude with it an appeal for equitable treatment of Christians which he made to the emperor Antoninus Pius. This "First Apology" of Justin is still extant, and is written in Greek.[1] The rescript of course would have been written in Latin, and Eusebius, in mentioning it as appended to Justin's *Apology* (Eus. *H.E.* iv. 8 [153], 9), tells us that it appeared there in the original Latin form, but that he is himself giving it in a Greek translation made "as well as [he] could." But in our extant manuscripts of Justin's *Apology*[2] we have the rescript

[1] A recent, convenient, and scholarly edition of the text may be found in Professor E. J. Goodspeed's *Die ältesten Apologeten* (Göttingen, 1914).

[2] There are only two complete manuscripts of Justin's text known to be in exist-

given in Greek, like the rest of the text, and without any sign of its being merely a Greek translation of the original Latin. But Justin himself calls it plainly a copy (*ἀντίγραφον*) and not a translation. The Greek text in Justin agrees so closely with that in Eusebius as to indicate that some editor or copyist of Justin's famous work after the time of Eusebius, in the interest of general understanding, substituted for the Latin text of the rescript the Greek version from the *Ecclesiastical History* of the later author, and from this archetype our extant manuscripts of the *Apology* are ultimately derived. But when Tyrannius (or Turanius) Rufinus, the presbyter of Aquileia, who was an active translator of ecclesiastical literature, rendered the *History* of Eusebius into Latin (A.D. 402-3), he of course gave the rescript also in Latin form.[1]

The case for the authenticity of the rescript is not so perfect as might be desired. Doubt about the matter appears to have been first raised by Keim in 1856, who declared against the authenticity, and was followed therein by such weighty names as Baur, Lipsius, Hausrath, Overbeck, and Aubé. On the other hand, its genuineness has been defended by men like Funk, Doulcet, Renan, Lightfoot, Mommsen, and Harnack, and has indeed been accepted by most recent scholars (as Ramsay and Hardy) who have expressed any verdict on the subject. The scale of prevalent opinion—whatever that is worth—certainly appears to incline toward the side of the defenders; and it is not without reason to observe that in this party are enrolled a number of men who are by no means noteworthy for conservative tendencies in criticism,

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ence, and one of these is a copy of the other, made as late as A.D. 1541. The earlier manuscript is dated A.D. 1364.

[1] It may be worth noting that for the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius and the translation thereof by Rufinus the best texts are now those edited by Ed. Schwartz and Th. Mommsen respectively, published in *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte* under the auspices of the Kirchenväter-Kommission of the Prussian Academy of Sciences.

and quite a few to whose theory about the legal status of Christians it would be a decided advantage to have this rescript put out of the way.

It seems hardly likely that the rescript could have been forged between the date of its professed writing and that of Justin's *Apology*. The age when such pious fabrications abounded was not yet. Nor is it readily conceivable that Justin would have ventured to append to his plea to Antoninus Pius a rescript of his immediate predecessor, about the genuineness of which there could be the slightest possible doubt. And furthermore, the only apparent temptation to forge such a document would arise from the fact that its existence had been referred to in some well-known literary work. This consideration would certainly assign to the putative forgery of the text of this rescript a date after even Melito's time.

The position of the rescript at the very end of the *Apology*, as a sort of footnote or appendix, suggests at once that it might have come to Justin's knowledge after he had finished his work. Yet it is by no means logically out of place where it is found. For Justin appears to say to the reigning emperor, " If you do the Christians this justice that I have demanded, you will also be acting entirely in accordance with the spirit of your revered predecessor and father." That would be an entirely proper and effective ending of his plea.

But this very position of the rescript has caused its assailants to suspect that it might have been forged and added to the text between the time of Justin and that of Eusebius, who would be entirely unsuspicious and uncritical about such matters. That is an argument by no means in itself unreasonable, if there were already visible any sufficient cause for doubting seriously the authenticity of the rescript. But to point out the possibility of a forgery is by no means the same thing as to establish in any degree its probability. And there appears to be no sufficient reason, extrinsic

or intrinsic, for a primary doubt of the authenticity of the document under discussion, unless on the part of those who approach its examination with an already established prepossession in favour of the theory that Christians universally stood in the practice of the Roman courts as once for all condemned outlaws. But the present writer cannot approve two of the arguments that have been advanced by defenders of the rescript.

It has been pointed out by them as evidence for its authenticity that only some two decades after the time of Justin, Melito plainly referred to this rescript of Hadrian.[1] It would be more proper to say that Melito referred to *a* rescript of Hadrian to Minicius Fundanus, proconsul of Asia, which was evidently considered by Melito to be favourable to the Christians. But that is by no means sure evidence that the text of the professed rescript as we have it is not a forgery made after Melito's time and based solely on Melito's own statement, or perhaps also with some flavour introduced from the rescript of Trajan to Pliny, which may have been known to the composer. The name of the proconsul addressed was given in Melito ; that of his predecessor, which is mentioned in the rescript, might not be out of the reach of a person intelligent enough to frame the alleged text of the rescript. The forgery might then have circulated at first in this independent form among the Christians, and later, but well before the time of Eusebius, have been appended to Justin's *Apology* by some pious editor who thought the apologist's plea, which was by this time only a historical document, would be strengthened thereby. This assumes, of course, that there was actually such a genuine rescript, and that Melito had somehow learned at least of its existence, though Justin had known nothing of it, and therefore had not referred to it. If it be suggested that the rescript might have been forged and put into circulation between the time of

[1] Melito ap. Eus. *H.E.* iv. 26 [190].

Justin and that of Melito, and the later writer have been innocently taken in by it, the answer is ready at hand that after Justin's time equally as before it there is no reference in known literature that would suggest the composition of such a forgery. Indeed, if we leave Melito out of the account, the same would be true of all the period before Eusebius. The *bona fides* of Justin, Melito, and Eusebius is above suspicion, though there is no reason to suppose that their critical acumen was any better than that of most Christians of those early centuries.

The second of the arguments for the defence with which I have little sympathy is that a forger appending his fabrication to the *Apology* of Justin would not be likely to give the rescript in Latin, but in Greek, which is the language not only of the *Apology* itself but also of the sentences by which the rescript is introduced. But I have just above pointed out the possibility that the forgery of the rescript and the welding of it to the *Apology* might have been distinct acts of distinct persons. The fairly early concocter of the rescript alone naturally knew enough to put it in Latin; the much later editor of the improved *Apology* had only to use the Latin document that had come into his hands from what he might very well have innocently supposed was ultimately an authentic source.

The possibility of a forgery in this matter must in my judgement be conceded. But I believe the rescript to be authentic, and should base that conviction mainly on the sufficient fact that the extrinsic and intrinsic evidence in its favour (into the details of which I must not here enter) is not primarily open to any considerable plainly unprejudiced challenge. The rescript stands in not quite such a clear position as that of Trajan's rescript to Pliny, but in one not very essentially inferior to that of the earlier document, with which its terms, indeed, are entirely in consonance. I also find it hardly possible to believe that

a forger would deliberately choose to represent Hadrian as referring to a letter from the (named) predecessor of Fundanus, instead of from Fundanus himself. The added detail could contribute nothing to the verisimilitude of the creation, and might in the long run endanger or wreck its credit. It also appears to me rather unlikely that the assumed forger (who must have lived later than Melito) could have known who the predecessor of Minicius was, or would have dared to invent a name for him. It is perhaps not everywhere known at the present day that though the (suffect) consulship of a Granianus in A.D. 106 and of a Minicius (often spelt Minucius) Fundanus in the next year is attested by inscriptions, neither inscription nor other record than this rescript and the reference of writers that follow it or one another, mentions either of them as governor in Asia.[1] And any widespread knowledge of the list of merely suffect consuls is highly dubitable. That would of course not be equally true of *consules ordinarii*.

But granted (as I think we must grant) the authenticity of the rescript, there is still an interesting question about its text to be solved, and on this question there has not unreasonably been marked division of opinion among critics. Is the Latin text of the rescript as transmitted by Rufinus a mere retranslation by him from the Greek version in Eusebius, or is it the actual text of the original document? Into the determination of this problem difficulties are introduced by the patent fact that Rufinus deals somewhat freely elsewhere in his translation with the text of Eusebius. But another one of the translator's habits is of especial interest here. Where Eusebius gives a Greek translation of passages quoted from the Latin of Tertullian, Rufinus inclines not to translate the Greek versions back into Latin, but to substitute therefor the original

[1] The probable date of their service there (about 123 and 124 respectively) depends on the conjecture of Waddington in his well-known *Fastes asiatiques*.

Latin words, taking them from some manuscript of Tertullian himself. It appears likely that he would follow the same procedure in any other similar case where the Latin was accessible to him. And the Latin text of the rescript was in all probability easy for him to find. It could not yet have been ejected from the most of the extant manuscripts of Justin in favour of the Greek translation of it by Eusebius. And it must have been accessible also in the seventh book of Ulpian's great work *De officio proconsulis*, in which, as Lactantius tells us (*Inst.* vii. 11. 19), the jurist included all imperial rescripts that touched upon the legal treatment of Christians. To some critics, also, the text of the rescript in Rufinus appears to exhibit the actual style of an original rescript, and not that of a translation of a translation. This argument, however, appears to be somewhat too adventurous. We have enough of Trajan's rescripts preserved by which we could test in point of style the authenticity of a newly discovered document that professed to belong to the same category. But we are not so well off in regard to Hadrian's chancellery, and might well hesitate to rely in any degree upon the argument just mentioned, but prefer to fall back on the more general evidence.

But there is one difficulty with regard to the conclusiveness of the argument for the authenticity of the Latin text, and it might prove serious. Indeed, it has appeared to some critics to dispose absolutely of the theory that Rufinus gives us the original Latin of the rescript itself. There is known to us only one Granianus who could possibly have been proconsul of Asia at the date suited to this rescript. His full name, attested by inscriptional evidence, was Q. Licinius Siluanus Granianus Quadronius Proculus.[1] Yet the manuscripts of Eusebius call the governor Serenius Granianus (there are some trifling orthographical variations in the tradition of the name). But

[1] Cf. the *Prosopographia Imperii Romani*, ii. p. 284, No. 170.

Serenius apparently does not occur elsewhere as a Latin *nomen*, and is in its form improbable. It must be taken as some copyist's error for the *cognomen* Serenus. But this Serenus Granianus is an unknown personage, and therefore in this connection an impossible one. By some copyist's error Siluanus must have been displaced in the text by Serenus. Yet in the Rufinus-text of the rescript we have the same name as in the Eusebius-text, Serenius (or rather Serenus). This has seemed to some critics proof positive and sufficient that Rufinus merely translated the rescript from the text in Eusebius. Yet a little consideration would show that the argument is not so decisive after all. If the rescript is genuine, somewhere and at some time Serenus was by error substituted for Siluanus. There is no reason at all to suppose that the error was made by Eusebius, still less to imagine that it might have been made much later in a manuscript of Eusebius and the text of Rufinus emended later yet from that especial copy, and that from these two texts our extant manuscripts of the respective authors are ultimately derived. On the contrary, let us consider that between Justin and Eusebius one hundred and fifty years intervened. The mistake might perfectly well have been made within that period in a manuscript of Justin. It would thus be perpetuated in both Eusebius and Rufinus, if they used manuscripts of the same tradition, and if Rufinus took his Latin text of the rescript (as I think on this as well as on other accounts more probable) from Justin rather than from Ulpian.

I should accordingly associate myself in an inconspicuous corner with those who believe the rescript to be genuine, and the text of it in Rufinus to be substantially that of the original,[1] though on this second

[1] The whole discussion concerning the text and the authenticity was clearly summarised (though not quite as presented here) by Bishop Lightfoot in his *S. Ignatius and S. Polycarp*, i. pp. 460 ff. Of later literature may be mentioned J. M. Mecklin, *Hadrians Reskript an Minucius Fundanus* (Leipzig, 1899); C. Callewaert,

proposition I am much less confident than on the first.

In an English dress the rescript as transmitted by Rufinus runs as follows:

"COPY OF THE LETTER OF THE EMPEROR HADRIAN TO MINUCIUS FUNDANUS, PROCONSUL OF ASIA

"I have received a letter addressed to me by your illustrious predecessor, Serenus Granianus; and it does not seem good to me to pass over his report in silence, lest innocent people be troubled and an opportunity for hostile action given to malicious accusers. Therefore if the provincials plainly desire to support this petition of theirs against the Christians by bringing some definite charge against them before the court, I do not forbid them to proceed thus; but I do not allow them to avail themselves in this matter of mere appeals and clamour. For it is much more just for you to examine the allegations, if any one wishes to act as accuser. Therefore, if any one brings an accusation, and proves that the people aforesaid are doing anything unlawful, in proportion to the desert of the crimes you are to determine also the penalties; but this you are most assuredly to see to: if any man maliciously brings false charges against any one of those people, you are to visit upon him more severe punishment in proportion to his wickedness." [1]

The circumstances under which the rescript of Hadrian was written are unknown, except in so far as they can be deduced from the text of the document itself. Eusebius, to be sure, does not hesitate to connect it with the *Apologies* which two Athenians are

"Le rescrit d'Hadrien à Minucius Fundanus," in *Rev. d'hist. et de littér. relig.* viii. (1903), pp. 152-189. Most of the books on early Church history also have something to say about the rescript. It should perhaps be noted that recently Eduard Schwartz has declared the version in Rufinus to be after all only a retranslation of that in Eusebius. This judgement he bases on the conviction that Rufinus would not have troubled himself to find the original Latin, and could not have had a manuscript of Justin accessible at Aquileia! For this reversal of his earlier verdict Schwartz excuses himself by saying that twenty years before he had been misled by Otto (cf. *Eusebius Kirchengeschichte*, IIter Bd., IIIer Th., p. clvi, adn. 2).

[1] Even if we ought to take our English from the Greek of Eusebius instead of from the Latin of Rufinus, no substantial change would be introduced thereby into the meaning, unless perhaps in the first sentence, where Rufinus gives us *innoxii* but Eusebius has only οἱ ἄνθρωποι, which stood there as early as the translation of the *Ecclesiastical History* into Syriac. Bishop Lightfoot acutely suggested that Eusebius must have actually written οἱ ἄθῳοι in this place.

said by him to have submitted to Hadrian.[1] His fuller account is in his *Chronicles*, where it runs as follows:

"Quadratus, a pupil of the apostles, and the Athenian Aristides, our philosopher, submitted to Hadrian books composed in behalf of the Christian religion; and Serenus Granianus, the illustrious legate, addressed a letter to the emperor, saying that it was unjust to grant to the clamours of the populace the blood of innocent men, and to prosecute them only for their name and sect without any crime on their part. Influenced by these appeals Hadrian writes to Minucius Fundanus, proconsul of Asia, that Christians are not to be condemned unless on charges of criminal acts. A copy of his letter is still extant."

St. Jerome himself, apparently building only on this passage from the *Chronicles* of Eusebius, lets his powers of imaginative inference carry him a bit further. He says:[2]

"Did not Quadratus, a pupil of the apostles, and bishop of the church in Athens, submit to the Emperor Hadrian, when he came to see the Eleusinian mysteries, a book in behalf of the Christian religion? And it so far aroused general admiration that this man's lofty talent quelled a fierce persecution."

It is perfectly evident that these accounts by Eusebius and Jerome, so far as they concern Hadrian's rescript and its occasion, are wholly a piece of mere guesswork, based entirely on the text of the rescript itself. Eusebius connects the delivery of the *Apologies* with the year 125–6. But if the judgement of Waddington is correct, Granianus (as the *History* has the name) was proconsul of Asia in about 123, and Fundanus the year following. We must therefore upset Waddington's list, or else reject the notion of Eusebius and Jerome about the influence of the *Apologies* on the rescript. The latter is much the better alternative. Eusebius was merely guessing at the connection.

Hadrian's character was many-sided. One of his

[1] Eus. *H.E.* iv. 3 [142]; *Chron.* ad ann. 2141.
[2] Hier. *Ep.* 70. 4 (Migne's *P.L.* xxii. 667).

most striking traits was an unbounded and insatiable curiosity about anything and everything that was worthy of interest.[1] He travelled much,[2] and was probably the best acquainted at first hand of all the emperors with the condition of the entire Roman dominions. He was a shrewd observer of whatever novelties fell in his way. Of all the ancients he is the only one recorded to have climbed mountains for the mere sake of seeing the sun rise.[3] He dabbled, if not delved, in all the arts, sciences, and philosophies. A considerable number of them he also practised. It is reported of him that he wished to enrol Christ among the gods, and actually went so far as to order temples without images to be erected in all the cities; but before it was too late he was induced to surrender his undertaking by a warning from the soothsayers, who assured him that, if he persisted in it, all men would become Christians, and the rest of the temples would be deserted.[4] But, on the other hand, Hadrian certainly had no good opinion of the Christians in Egypt, if a very lively letter ascribed to him can possibly be genuine. "In this Egypt which you used to praise to me [he writes] the worshippers of Sarapis are Christians, and those who call themselves bishops of Christ adore Sarapis: there is not a leader of the Jewish synagogue, not a Samaritan, not a Christian presbyter, who does not practise fortune-telling and divination and go mad over athletics. When the [Jewish ?] patriarch himself comes to Egypt, one party makes him worship Sarapis, the other, Christ. There are no gentlemen of wealth and leisure in Egypt. Everybody works at something or other — glass-blowing, paper-making, linen-weaving—and lives on what he makes out of it. Even the halt, maimed,

[1] Tert. *Apol.* 5 *Hadrianus, omnium curiositatum explorator.*

[2] Spart. *Vita Hadr.* 13. 5 *nec quisquam fere principum tantum terrarum tam celeriter peragrauit.*

[3] *Ibid.* 13. 3; 14. 3.

[4] Lampr. *Vita Alex. Seu.* 43. 6, 7.

and blind work at something. There are no idlers. Money is their only god. Christians, Jews, gentiles, all alike worship money." [1] Evidently this remarkable display of syncretism in Alexandria surpassed even Hadrian's capacity for tolerant eclecticism, but he plainly did not mean to attempt a cure of the conditions that he deprecates.

But there is nothing in Hadrian's known disposition that would not lead him toward tolerance for the Christian faith and its devotees, when once he could become acquainted with it and them. To this desirable approximation the *Apology* of Quadratus may have contributed something. The rescript to Fundanus is entirely in accord with the emperor's character, and its concern about justice agrees with his constant effort to foster good government in the provinces.

Let us consider, then, what status of Christians the rescript presupposes as already prevailing, and what effect it could have upon their future.

The rescript evidently concerns Christians alone and no other class of people, though of course the principles involved would naturally apply as well to heathen as to Christian. In the sentences with which Justin introduces his copy of the rescript he tells us nothing of the circumstances which led Granianus to make his reference to the emperor. Probably he knew nothing about that matter. Melito is equally silent. He probably knew nothing of the rescript except through Justin's copy. We are left to deduce what information we can from the terms of the rescript itself. It was addressed to a governor of Asia, if the remark of Melito, the heading of the letter in Rufinus, and the statement about it by Eusebius are to be trusted. That province had long been a centre of ultra-Roman national sentiment and of an almost fanatical imperial cult. St. Paul had met within its borders the stoutest

[1] Vop. *Vita Saturn.* 8. 1-7. Some of this sounds wonderfully like the popular criticism of American life at the present day.

pagan resistance to the introduction of the new faith. It was the scene at a later period than Hadrian's of some of the most painful popular tumults aimed against Christianity. One may safely infer that pressure had been brought to bear upon the proconsul to induce him to take severe action against Christians, and he had discreetly shifted the responsibility, or at least postponed the day of decision, by professing the necessity of receiving specific instructions directly from the emperor himself. The letter reads as if the governor had clearly discouraged accusations against Christians, and was now being riotously appealed to on the ground that it was his manifest official duty to entertain them.

Perhaps the most important point for us about the rescript is this: it is (to my mind) plainly evident that neither the governor in his questions nor the emperor in his reply recognises that there is actually in existence any standing principle of Roman legal interpretation or practice in accordance with which a Christian stood *ipso facto* condemned. If there were such a thing—such an *institutum Neronianum* as has been so stoutly affirmed by many modern writers—the emperor surely would not dream of replying as he did, that a Christian could not be arraigned unless he was charged by a private accuser with some specific illegal act—that is, he should not be charged merely with being a Christian; he should not be presumed to be thus "guilty on habit and repute." Moreover, if Christians already stood condemned before the law as "brigands" and "outlaws," "enemies of the human race," there could be no opportunity for the magistrate to act as Hadrian directs by making the punishment fit the crime. There could be no possible gradation of penalties. The crime would be one only, that of being a Christian; the penalty could be one only, that of death. Very manifestly Hadrian did not hold that there was any crime in being a Christian.

But it would not be unreasonable to guess that many of the Asiatic populace did not take this strictly legal view of the matter. They hated Christians, and were wont to demand tumultuously "by appeals and clamour" that they be put to death. They did not trouble themselves about any petty question of legal delicts. The Roman governor was all-powerful; let him proceed against this detestable sect! It is not unlikely that some unconscientious governors, who were bound above all things to preserve the Roman peace and to quiet disturbance, had yielded to this mob-insistence and condemned Christians arbitrarily as the easiest way out of an awkward situation. The later case of Polycarp would furnish us an example of such action. Thus may have arisen, or may have been strengthened, the popular idea that Christians not merely ought to be but could be legally condemned as Christians, and out of this had come that view of the situation which led to the somewhat inexact information given Pliny by members of his *consilium* in the second series of trials of Christians in Bithynia.

Hadrian says nothing about the duty of the governor to search out offenders, since no question about that matter had been raised by Granianus. But it is clearly implied that the governor was not to proceed against Christians *proprio motu*. That also would be in accord with the precedent established by Trajan's rescript to Pliny. It was a principle generally, though apparently not universally, regarded by magistrates through the rest of the second century, if we may judge from Christian protests against occasional alleged violations of it.

The rescript of Hadrian of course effected no change in the legal status of Christians. Why should it do so? The profession of Christianity had never been made a crime *per se* by Roman law or practice. The rescript simply recognised and practically reiterated that patent fact in the face of popular clamour to the contrary.

It indeed strengthened the hands of the governor against wanton attacks upon Christians by definitely instructing him that he was to protect the innocent and deter malicious accusers by putting in active operation against them the severe provisions of the law *de calumnia*. After Hadrian's time, however, if that monarch had actually meant to show Christians any especial favour (which is not evident), the intention was in some degree frustrated by a new slant given to the growing dislike of Christians among the lower classes, and to the increasing apprehension among the magistrates of the opposition of Christianity to the principles and spirit of the Roman power. A definite charge of disloyalty in spirit and action furnished the legal basis for most of the succeeding prosecutions of which we have definite indications available. Constructive treason was the crime ordinarily alleged; and from this the defendant could readily purge himself by passing such a test as Pliny had adopted from an unspecified source and Trajan had approved. That Hadrian recognised the existence of no established principle of general outlawry of Christianity is of course another proof of the otherwise sufficiently established fact that Trajan also had not done so.

The plain terms of Hadrian's rescript are quite inconsistent with any theory that Christians were at that time or had ever been legally punished in accordance with a standing principle as proscribed outlaws. Therefore Sir William Ramsay (*op. cit.* p. 324), with a unique and most curious view of the possible nature of imperial legislation, calls this rescript a conscious and intentional "sarcasm," and says that "sarcasm is not government." But the rescript recognises Christians as standing on precisely the same footing before the law as all other citizens and subjects. I should call that a mark not merely of government, but of good government. Where is the "sarcasm"?

CHAPTER IX

ON "CLEMENT OF ROME"

THE problems connected with the date, personality, and writings of "Clement of Rome" (so-called to distinguish him from the later "Clement of Alexandria") cannot fail to be interesting to the classical student who is led to consider the development of the new religion in the early centuries of the Roman Empire and its relations to the Roman State. But the available information concerning this Clement is extremely scanty, vague, and perplexing. The name Clemens is a very common one in the first and second centuries of the Empire, so common that the classicist would say it cannot in itself be expected to furnish any basis for deductions concerning the identity, antecedents, or connections of any Christian of that name.

One of the early bishops of Rome is reported on the authority of various pontifical lists to have been called Clement. The Latin name looks curious by isolation in the midst of a considerable number of appellations purely Greek, but it is not on that account of necessity to be rejected. Of course, the bishop Clement might have been of Greek birth or parentage, and might owe his Roman name to being a *libertus* of some Roman citizen. This has been suggested, and appears to be now the general belief; but at the period when the bishop Clement is alleged to have lived, it is not very likely that a *libertinus* would be known by the *cognomen* of his *patronus*. He would more likely

retain his former slave name as his ordinary appellation, though he would be entitled to prefix to this for formal purposes the *praenomen* and *gentilicium* of his *patronus*. Yet it is possible that the descendant of a *libertinus* might have a Roman *cognomen* substituted for that borne by his father or grandfather, though this would appear more likely in the second century of the Empire than in the first, if one may hazard a guess based on apparent general tendencies rather than propound an inference founded on evidence which is not available (but cf. Tenney Frank, "Race Mixture in the Roman Empire," in *American Historical Review*, xxi. 692 f.). Tacitus, however (*Ann.* ii. 39), tells us of a slave of Agrippa Postumus, as early as A.D. 14, who bore the name of Clemens. Whence he derived it is quite unknown, as is also his nationality. Tacitus also mentions (*Ann.* i. 23. 5; A.D. 14) a centurion named Iulius Clemens. Dr. L. R. Dean, in his *Study of the Cognomina of Soldiers in the Roman Legions*, shows that Clemens was one of the most popular *cognomina* in the "regular army" of the Empire, so far as the testimony of extant inscriptions can give us information. These soldiers apparently took Roman names according to their fancy, but very many of the men themselves were not Italian in origin. Perhaps their choice was based on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle. A bishop Clemens, if indeed a Greek, might well be, not of servile, but of military antecedents. (Dr. Dean's tables show two soldiers named even Flauius Clemens, and that was the name of "Clement of Alexandria.")

But whatever the source of his name, the various pontifical lists and other traditions are in considerable disagreement concerning Bishop Clement's date and his position in the succession. Indeed, he is the chief disturbing factor in the enumeration of the early Roman pontiffs. No statements about him can be judged to have the absolute quality of historical facts. The lists of the early Roman bishops do not seem to rest surely

on accurate record or tradition. They appear to be tentative compilations made when historical interest began to quicken, and later to have been more or less revised, but probably without any further access of knowledge.[1]

A certain Flauius Clemens, a member of the imperial family of the Flavians, who was put to death by Domitian, is believed by many modern scholars to have been a Christian. This may possibly be true, though no extant ancient authorities of importance, whether Christian or pagan, appear to have been aware of the fact, and the statements on which is based the modern guess (it is hardly more than that) are at least susceptible of other interpretation (cf. the preceding chapter of this book on The Alleged Persecution by Domitian). He certainly played no active part in the history of the Church, and there is not the slightest reason (save perhaps in pious desire and imagination) for connecting any other Christian Clement with him or with his family, though of course the possibility of such a connection cannot be denied. But the pursuit of such will-o'-the-wisps may lead into a realm of mental haziness concerning the quality of historical evidence. It is best avoided, however sentimentally or romantically attractive it may appear. Especially in the process of identification where there is little or no direct evidence available, and many conflicting indications are to be reconciled, much more caution

[1] Hegesippus appears to have been the first man to attempt the compilation of such a list: cf. Eus. *H.E.* iv. 22, reading, with all the MSS. and the Syriac version, *διαδοχήν* in place of the conjectural *διατριβήν*, which was based on the blundering version of Rufinus, who himself may have been influenced by the statement of Eusebius elsewhere (*H.E.* iv. 11 [157]) that Hegesippus remained in Rome till into the episcopate of Eleutherus. The interest of Hegesippus in matters of early Church history seems to have been mainly concerned with his idea that a continuity of the episcopate was a witness to the continuity of apostolic doctrine, and therefore the ability to cite by names the unbroken list of bishops of a given see was of great importance. On the various lists of the early bishops of Rome, the reader may well consult Bishop Lightfoot's dissertation (in his *Clement*, i. pp. 201-345), supplementing it by later work, to which recent manuals and cyclopaedias of Church history (together with periodicals) will furnish a key. The disquisitions of Duchesne and Mommsen, prefixed to their editions of the *Liber Pontificalis*, should not be neglected, nor that of Harnack, in his *Gesch. der altchr. Litteratur*, ii. 1, pp. 70-230.

is requisite than is frequently observed. Even identifications unquestioningly made by early Christian writers are not implicitly to be trusted, as if these writers had at command more evidence than is available to us, or depended on an unbroken and genuine tradition from the times concerned. On the contrary, they were notoriously uncritical, and in the first century or two there appears to have been a lamentable defectiveness of record and tradition in the local Churches. The early Church history had to be painfully pieced together by succeeding generations, and was largely conjectural. And it should always be remembered that a "unanimous ancient tradition," of which we often hear so much in modern historical discussion, may often mean nothing more than that an attractive but baseless conjecture made by some one writer gained general credence among non-critical successors who had no other source of knowledge on the subject.

One Hermas was, at any rate in his early life, the slave of a woman apparently resident in or near Rome. There are certain textual difficulties which lead most critics to think that at the time of at least the first two of the *Visions*, which form the subject of the first part of his *Shepherd*, he was living in or near Cumae. I am more disposed to avoid the emendation of κώμας to Κούμας (*Vis.* i. 1. 3 ; ii. 1. 1), and to understand that at these times, as at that of *Vis.* iv., Hermas was merely on his way from "the city" into the neighbouring country, where in another passage (*Vis.* iii. 1. 2) he speaks of himself, or rather his interlocutrix speaks of him, as regularly engaged in farm work.

This understanding is, to be sure, in spite of the fact that the expression πορεύεσθαι εἰς κώμας would be helped by explication or support from other examples, which are lacking. But there is much greater difficulty in reconciling Cumae with the context, and there is no value in the remark long ago made that when Hermas takes the old woman with the

book in her hand to be the Sibyl, it is the Cumaean locality of the vision that suggests the identification. Stories of the Sibyl, and in this guise, were probably a commonplace all over Italy. Moreover, those who would put the *Visions* in the neighbourhood of Cumae have to imagine an unrecorded Via Campana to suit the locality (*Vis.* iv. 1. 2).[1] On the other hand, Rome had a well-known Via Campana leading from the city down the right bank of the Tiber to the Campus Salinarum.[2] The ancient Latin versions of Hermas interpret κώμας in *Vis.* i. 1. 3 by the gloss *ciuitatem Ostiorum*, which clearly supports the Roman identification. But the corresponding rendering of the same word in *Vis.* ii. 1. 1 is *regionem Cumanorum*, which quite spoils the former testimony and indicates an early misapprehension. Κώμη is defined in *CGL*, ii. 357, by *uilla castellum hic uicus*. Possibly the references in Hermas may be to some as yet unidentified *uilla* or *uicus* in the district of Rome, or they may mean only "into the country," which is perhaps more likely. I do not think they can possibly refer to any *villeggiatura* (cf. *Vis.* iii. 1. 2).

"The city," or "this city" (cf. *Vis.* ii. 4. 3), of the *Shepherd* is therefore always Rome, and the local Church is accordingly the Church at Rome. In *Vis.* ii. 4. 3 Hermas represents his supernatural instructress as charging him concerning her revelations, "You are to write out two booklets and send one to Clement and one to Grapte. Clement then is to send it to the cities outside, for that is his function. . . . But in this city you are to read it aloud in the company of the presbyters who preside over the Church." As "the

[1] The Via Campana named by Beloch in his *Campanien* (map) appears to be, as far as the name is concerned, a creation of pure conjecture, probably based on this passage in Hermas. Hülsen (cf. *Campana Via* in Pauly-Wissowa *Real-encycl.*) knows of no such road.

[2] Possibly, however, the ὁδὸς καμπανή may mean merely "the country lane." Hermas appears to speak of it as if it were a branch of some main highway (ἡ ὁδὸς ἡ δημοσία), but may mean that the Via Campana is itself the public highway, about ten stadia from which lay the spot whither he was bound.

cities outside " seem to be contrasted with " this city," it appears certain that this Clement is a contemporary official of the Church in Rome (the Church of Hermas himself), who acts as a clerk or secretary in charge of its foreign correspondence. He may, of course, have also held other office. He might be very probably one of the deacons, or presbyters, or (so far as this is concerned) even the bishop, in the limited sense of the episcopal title and authority in the Roman Church of that day. Granted the authenticity and sincerity of the *Shepherd* of Hermas, its testimony to the contemporary existence of a Clement qualified and appointed to represent the Church at Rome in its communications with Churches elsewhere is simple, clear, and unsuspicious. If any difficulties can be invoked to invalidate it, they are at any rate not visible on the surface. The reference, of course, might plausibly be taken as indicating that Hermas thought his non-Roman readers would already know that such a Clement existed in the Church at Rome at that time. But could he have thought that non-Roman readers would also know of the existence in the Roman Church of that Grapte—a deaconess, perhaps?—to whom the other copy of the book was to be sent? This consideration suggests caution regarding the otherwise plausible inference concerning his possible notion about foreign acquaintance with Clement, and makes it more likely that the reference to Clement is entirely without ulterior motivation.

The *Shepherd* of Hermas dates in all probability from toward the middle of the second century after Christ. The external evidence for this is found in the statement of the Muratorian Canon, which affirms that the *Shepherd* was written " quite recently, in our own time, in the city of Rome, by Hermas, when his brother Pius was filling the see of the church in the city of Rome." The internal evidence harmonises with this, being derived from the character of the theological

questions treated or touched upon in the book, and (as suggesting a *terminus ante quem*) from the indication in it that the episcopate was not yet sharply distinguished from the presbyterate (cf. *Vis.* ii. 2. 6; ii. 4. 2, 3; iii. 1. 8; iii. 5. 1 *bis*; iii. 9. 7; possibly also *Sim.* viii. 7. 4; ix. 25. 2; ix. 27. 2). The Muratorian Canon agrees, then, with the inference drawn from the text of Hermas that the treatise is Roman in origin; and it also indicates that the foreign secretary, Clement, was certainly not bishop at that time. It is impossible that he should have become so at a later date, since from the middle of the second century the list of the Roman bishops appears to be in general fairly trustworthy, and no Pope Clement figures in history after the somewhat intangible personage already mentioned, until we arrive at nearly the middle of the eleventh century. The pontifical lists and traditions, with all their variations, put Pope Clement First far too early to make it possible, under ordinary principles and processes of interpretation and reconciliation, to identify him with the Clement mentioned by Hermas as living toward the middle of the second century, and not bishop—unless, indeed, we are to imagine that the second *Vision* (or the first and second) was written much earlier than the reign of Pius, and Clement the writer might have been bishop at that previous time. Those moderns who feel the temptation or the urgent need to identify the two Clements at almost all hazards are wont to be content with this explanation. But even that involves an unconscionable strain on each of the two elements that are thus stretched, one forward, one backward, to a chronological meeting-point. Serious difficulty is worked for either the alleged order or the terms of the early popes, or for both order and terms, and the testimony of the Muratorian Canon must also be disregarded, unless it is helped out in one of two ways—by the arbitrary device already mentioned of attributing a

much earlier date to the composition of *Vis.* (i. and) ii., or by pushing the date of Pius much further back toward the beginning of the second century, a process which in its turn makes confusion worse confounded in the pontifical annals, and possibly introduces some trouble with the date or testimony of the Muratorian Canon. Moreover, there stands in the way of such a theory (at least for those who believe with Dionysius —see pp. 227, 310—that Clement was the writer of the letter to the Corinthians) the very serious consideration that if Clement the secretary could have lived a few decades earlier, and Hermas also have composed *Vis.* (i. and) ii. at this earlier date, the letter to the Corinthians might be expected to have attained so much popularity by the time Hermas wrote and published the rest of the *Shepherd* that some trace of its influence would surely be found therein. There is no such trace discoverable. The only possible conclusion is that *1 Clement* and the *Shepherd* are practically contemporaneous compositions, and the date of the former must be determined from the date of the latter.

And, after all, what is the pressing need of such an identification of secretary and bishop—and at the expense of such painful intellectual contortions? If it appears necessary in behalf of other considerations thus far to dislocate the traditions of the papal succession, why is it not more simple and reasonable rather to conclude at once that, since Clement the pope *ex hypothesi* cannot be other than Clement the writer, and Clement the writer is a sufficiently well-authenticated personage living at a time when Clement the pope could not have lived, that shadowy pontiff from a practically prehistoric papal age cannot ever have had an actual existence, but must be a mere mythical double of Clement the writer; a creature of later imagination, fashioned to suit and explain the tradition of the great dignity and importance that Clement the writer came to possess in popular Christian belief?

This would be at any rate more satisfactory than to attempt, in the interests of yet another theory, to drag these two discordant dates into a violently forced agreement.

The ancients who (apparently following Origen) identified Clement of Philippi (St. Paul to the Philippians iv. 3) with Clement the Roman writer, and the latter with Clement the bishop, were in happy case. They had no troublesome knowledge about conflicting dates, no care about possible discrepancies in equally plausible pieces of evidence, no anxiety about corroborative testimony. A conjecture was often as valid to their minds as a deduction. An identification looked attractive; they recorded it, with a placid disregard of difficulties that cause anguish to their modern disciples. A peculiarly striking instance of the desperate straits into which the latter are occasionally driven may be mentioned here. It has actually been suggested in all seriousness that Hermas may have inserted the reference to Clement the writer as a "literary device," knowing that there was no such man then living in the Roman Church, but aware that there had been a well-known one at a considerably earlier time. The object of this "literary device," to the minds of those who thus explain the reference, could have been only "to lend an air of verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative." But how it could have seemed likely to Hermas to accomplish such a result in the view of his contemporaries (however gullible he might expect posterity to be), I am quite unable to conceive. Of course also the modern expounders must attribute to the professedly inspired recorder of divine visions some esoteric conceptions of truthfulness as well as of literary effect; and this is particularly amusing, inasmuch as Hermas in *Mand.* iii. has a most earnest and highly virtuous homily on the necessity of scrupulous veracity in all matters. At that gait any stumbling-block in

the path toward any desired conclusion can be readily avoided or removed. If such canons of explanation are approved, there is an end to all critical examination of historical evidence.

Various other judgements of the learned concerning the date and authorship of the *Shepherd* are conveniently summarised in Gebhardt-Harnack-Zahn, *Patrum apostol. op.*, fasc. 3, pp. lxxxiii-iv. I need not discuss them here, as my modest comments are not meant to traverse the entire subject.

But let us proceed to the examination of other ancient witnesses. For the testimony of Hegesippus we have to depend upon the remarks and excerpts in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius. Hegesippus had certainly spent some time in Corinth and thence proceeded to Rome. It appears from the passages in Eusebius (*H.E.* iii. 16; iv. 22) that while Hegesippus was in Corinth the Church in that city made him acquainted with a "noteworthy and admirable" letter that had been addressed to them by the Church in Rome. It does not appear that in his account he ascribed any individual authorship to the letter, or any date beyond assigning it to a time when a serious dispute had arisen in the Corinthian Church. There is no indication that he knew even approximately the period of this Church quarrel. Of course he may have had very definite views on these points, but if he had expressed them in writing, it might seem likely that more certain indication of the fact would have got into the text of the *Ecclesiastical History*.

The testimony of Hegesippus to the existence of such a noteworthy letter to the Corinthians is the earliest definite testimony on that point available. It dates probably from a time well back toward the middle of the second century, as he arrived in Rome, according to his own account,[1] during the pontificate of Anicetus, and Anicetus succeeded Pius, the brother of Hermas,

[1] *Vid.* Eus. *H.E.* iv. 22 [182], comparing *ibid.* iv. 11 [157].

A.D. 153–155, and is reported to have lived eleven years thereafter.

Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, is definitely quoted by Eusebius (*H.E.* iv. 23. 9) as saying, in a letter to Soter, bishop of Rome in succession to Anicetus, that the previous letter of the Roman Church to the Corinthian was written by Clement. This is the earliest definite ascription of the authorship of such a letter to a Clement. Dionysius may have thought Clement to have been, like Soter, bishop of Rome, but Eusebius does not represent him as saying so.

Irenaeus (*Adu. Haer.* iii. 3. 3), bishop of Lyons, carries us a step in advance concerning Clement. He describes, at greater length than the extant reports of Hegesippus and Dionysius as quoted by Eusebius, a letter written by the Church in Rome to the Church in Corinth. The superscription, as well as his summary of the contents of the document and of its occasion, agrees with the so-called *First Epistle of Clement* to the Corinthians that has been preserved to our day. I see no good reason for doubting the substantial identity of the now extant letter with that mentioned by Hegesippus, Dionysius, and Irenaeus. The last-named states the address of the letter with accuracy. He does not say that it was written by Clement, but that it was written when Clement was bishop of Rome, the third in order after the apostles Peter and Paul had founded and established the Church and placed Linus in the episcopate of it. This is probably the earliest extant mention of a Clement as bishop of Rome. It might reasonably be conceded that, since Irenaeus would be likely to regard the bishop as naturally representing in correspondence the local Church (cf. himself and also his contemporaries, Soter of Rome and Dionysius of Corinth), his form of statement at least ought not to be taken as indicating that he did not think Clement the bishop to be the actual writer of the letter. Irenaeus possibly got his information

about the letter, about its date, and about the episcopal succession, directly from the Church in Rome, which he is reported as having visited. But he may have derived it from the writings of Hegesippus, to whose compilation the Church in Rome owed its knowledge of the matter (see pp. 310 ff.).[1] Irenaeus affirms that Clement had companied with the Apostles and been instructed by them.

Clement of Alexandria knew, praised, and quoted at some length the letter, ascribing it to a Clement whom he calls "apostle." Perhaps by this designation he means only to describe him as an intimate disciple and immediate successor of the Apostolic founders of the Church in Rome.

In Origen we have, however, the first definite statement of identification. According to him (*In Ioh.* vi. 36) the letter was written by Clement, bishop of Rome, who was also the Clement addressed by St. Paul as a resident at Philippi.

Eusebius follows without question (*H.E.* iii. 16) the identification by Origen, and later writers follow Eusebius. There is no indication of any of them possessing any further evidence about the bishop Clement. He is an utterly colourless figure—a name and nothing more—not even a definitely assigned member of the papal procession. The remarks of Irenaeus about Clement as an immediate disciple of the apostles and imbued with their doctrine are of that complimentary vagueness that strongly suggests no other source for them than a constructive imagination, such as Hegesippus appears to have possessed. The florid biographical details of the spurious later writings attributed to Clement are of course utterly without

[1] Irenaeus quotes the list of the bishops of the Roman see as if in some way it was a guarantee of the secure preservation in Rome of the unimpaired Apostolic doctrine. This is a precise repetition of the thought of Hegesippus (cf. pp. 219, 304). As Irenaeus apparently borrowed the idea from Hegesippus, so also he probably took from him the list of the Roman bishops. But of course Irenaeus may have got both idea and list from the Church in Rome on the occasion of his visit to the capital. But the Roman Church had them from Hegesippus.

foundation in fact, and even the formal account in the *Liber Pontificalis*, which depends in part upon them, cannot be judged to embody authentic information.

Jerome (*De Vir. Ill.* 15) remarks on differences of opinion among the Romans themselves concerning their own early episcopal succession, and the varied accounts that have come down to us [1] show abundant signs of fogginess about the beginnings of the Church in the imperial capital as well as elsewhere. Nor is this at all surprising. The early days of a struggling cult, generally despised and detested and sometimes subjected to actual persecution, are not the days for the development or existence of careful and eager regard for historic origins; and local Church histories had not yet been thought of. As regards bishops, neither 1 *Clement* nor the *Shepherd* of Hermas knows anything of a monarchical episcopate in the Church at Rome. Its government appears to rest with the entire body of the presbyters. There is no mention or suggestion of a single ruling bishop, not even in the exhortation of Clement (himself, we are asked to believe, a bishop) to the Church in Corinth to respect the ministerial succession from the Apostles. Only when the episcopate began to emerge in the West above the general level of the presbyterate (about the middle of the second century) would there be any probable effort to compile a list of the past bishops of Rome. And in view of the almost certain lack of records and the certain absence of critical scholarship at that age, we need not shrink from very decided scepticism about the general value of second-century ecclesiastical statements concerning first-century ecclesiastical events.

As regards the ascription of the letter to Clement, the apparently gradual development of the tale is to

[1] Tertullian (*Praescr. Haer.* 32) said that the Roman Church could point to Clement as its first bishop, ordained as such by St. Peter. So also the (fictitious) epistle of Clement to James prefixed to the Clementine Homilies. Jerome (*loc. cit.*) says *plerique Latinorum* so believed. Other sources put Clement second in the list, and a Syriac document left him out altogether. Cf. p. 232.

be noted. There was first the indubitable existence of a noteworthy letter, not containing any sign of the personality of the scribe, but addressed by the Church in Rome to the Church in Corinth; thus the letter is earlier cited without reference to any individual writer; next its actual author is reputed to be Clement; afterward this Clement is thought to have been bishop of Rome; and finally this bishop is identified with a Clement who was a friend of, and fellow-worker with, St. Paul, thus supporting the possibly already formulated reasoning that put him early in the list of a Roman hierarchy accredited by that time, though there was no definite agreement about his precise position in it.

Of course the vagueness of the second-century Roman churchmen about the succession of their early bishops was at least in part due to the fact that for the first hundred years or so they had no such single ecclesiastical rulers, but the bishop was at most only the unassuming chairman of a college of fellow-presbyters.

We have then before us, on the one hand, the direct testimony of Hermas to the contemporary existence in his own Church at Rome of an official named Clement, whose accredited duty it was to send communications to foreign churches. There is no reason to doubt the accuracy and ingenuousness of this testimony, unless on the ground that it seriously interferes with the adoption of a certain other agreeable belief. And those who would affirm that the statement in the *Shepherd* about Clement is sophisticated (a "literary device") must reckon with the disturbing fact that the *Shepherd* displays no other trace of any influence by, or knowledge of, the famed letter of the Church in Rome to that in Corinth. That it would betray imitation, or at least acquaintance, under the postulated circumstances appears almost inevitable. In addition to the unimpeachable witness of Hermas we have an actual letter of the Roman Church to the Corinthian,

the immediate authorship of which came to be widely ascribed in antiquity to a Clement, though a mere conjecture based on the reference in the *Shepherd* of Hermas to a suitable Clement may have been the sole and only source of the original tradition. The conclusion would appear fairly necessary that, if the letter to the Church in Corinth was indeed actually written by a Clement, he must be identified with the Clement mentioned by Hermas.

On the other hand, we have a belief current in antiquity, though apparently of gradual growth, that the Clement of the well-known letter to the Corinthians was an early Roman bishop of that name. It appears impossible by any ordinary and natural modes of procedure to identify this bishop of Rome with the secretary Clement of the *Shepherd*. No extant ancient author makes such an attempt. The bishop himself is a figure of dubious authenticity. To say nothing of other considerations, the varying positions assigned him in the episcopal succession at Rome indicate that there was no early and fixed tradition concerning him, still less a definite record. Nor is it probable that there was any actual and trustworthy tradition extant even in the Church at Rome concerning any of the early occupants of that see, still less any veritable documentary evidence. Even the writer of the article on Clement in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* remarks that every one is now agreed that the early popes Cletus and Anencletus (*alias* Anacletus) did not both have an actual existence. It is of course a different thing to suggest that Pope Clement I., whose only possible double is, not another nearly contemporary pope, but at best only a presbyter considerably removed in time from even the latest of the various dates assigned to his episcopal homonym, also had no actual existence. But I am inclined to believe that such is the case.

The evolution of the current belief appears to me to be about as follows: Hermas in his *Shepherd*

incidentally mentions a Clement who is the official correspondent for the Church at Rome with other churches. The *Shepherd* is widely read and held in very high esteem. A substantially contemporary letter of the Roman Church to the Corinthian is also widely read and speedily attains a quasi-canonical authority. Its actual authorship is naturally ascribed to the secretary Clement mentioned by Hermas. It is believed, as a result of the reverence in which the book is held, and of the growing prominence of the episcopate over the presbyterate in the West, that the writer Clement must have been a bishop of the Roman Church. The date of the book is unknown, but its acquired authority, supported perhaps by the reference in it to Sts. Peter and Paul, and to the necessity of the Apostolic ministry, leads to the belief that Clement, the author-bishop, must have been closely associated with the Apostles. A conjectural place is assigned him accordingly in the already formed or forming list of the earlier bishops of the Apostolic see, though there is lack of unanimity about his precise position. (It is perhaps of some significance that in an ancient Syriac list of the early bishops of Rome the name of Clement does not occur at all—so Bishop Lightfoot, in his edition of *Philippians*, p. 221, referring to Cureton's *Ancient Syriac Documents*, p. 71.)[1]

Perhaps a word ought to be added here about the alleged "archaeological evidence" furnished by the present existence in Rome of an ancient Church of San Clemente superimposed above a yet more ancient church, and this in turn above a dwelling-house (or

[1] There may be some significance in the fact that of the fourteen bishops of Rome listed in order next after St. Peter by the *Liber Pontificalis*, all but Clement and Alexander are said to have been buried near St. Peter *in Baticanum*. Alexander is reported to have been interred at the seventh milestone on the Via Nomentana, *ubi decollatus est*, and Clement *in Grecia*. Duchesne (*Lib. Pont.* i. 123) explains by saying that the place of burial of Clement was evidently unknown at a very early date. This, he thinks, led to the confusion of Clement of Rome with a Clement of Cherson (on which see Lightfoot, *S. Clement of Rome*, i. 85 ff.). Of course this explanation by Duchesne does nothing at all toward supporting the credibility of the Clement-myth.

houses) of yet an earlier period. But the utmost that can be regarded as substantiated by this series of structures is that perhaps as early as the fourth century the belief in Clement the pope, with all its accretions, existed in the city of Rome. Of this we were already aware.

But I have thus far left certain other conceivable theories untouched, and exigencies of space demand that they be but briefly treated.

Why not believe at any rate that Clement, the first-century pope, had an actual existence, even though the letter to the Corinthians may have been erroneously attributed to him, when it was really the work of that non-episcopal namesake mentioned by Hermas? This might be the appeal of those who are reluctant to yield to any iconoclastic tendencies, and would defend the integrity of the pontifical legend against wanton assault. If there were any actual evidence for Pope Clement's existence other than a somewhat tremulous and wavering affirmation from about the middle of the second century and later, which itself may have been only in the attempt to give greater substance and dignity to the mere name of the secretary Clement, that might be a more satisfactory hypothesis. But there is no real evidence for him. His vacillating wraith is particularly unconvincing, even in the midst of equally unknown figures that precede (according to some forms of the ancient enumeration) and follow him. By coming out somewhat more into the open than do his shadowy colleagues he has made himself subject to examination. He is too plainly a creation *ad hoc*. In addition to what I have pointed out in the preceding pages, or rather in the light of those other reasons for incredulity, I will even confess that his very name appears to me suspicious, in spite of the improved explanation for it that I have suggested, and of which I am willing to make a present to any one who can use it.

Why not then believe that there were the two

Clements, and that the bishop was the author of the famous letter, while the Clement of Hermas, if not a sophisticated figure, was merely an accidental namesake of whom nothing further is known? This is a quite untenable alternative proposition. In the first place, to hold it would be to postulate that in the first century the bishop stood out, as otherwise he would hardly appear to do before the middle of the second century, as the official representative of the Roman Church; that by the time of Hermas this official pre-eminence was at least in abeyance; and that it was resumed in the age immediately following. This is hardly conceivable. There is also the stubborn fact that no influence of the letter to the Corinthians on the *Shepherd* can be detected, though both compositions had their origin in the same Church, and (on the theory discussed in this paragraph) there had been time enough for the former to have attained already somewhat of its great popularity, before Hermas penned his *Shepherd*. A work must become popular before it will be made a centre of fictitious accretions. This state was reached by 1 *Clement* as early as the second half of the second century after Christ. Moreover, there are very serious chronological difficulties in the way of ascribing the letter aforesaid to a first-century writer, and especially to the reputed bishop Clement. I shall point out some of them in the discussion that follows. They have been glozed over, or a painful and unsuccessful attempt to explain them away has been made by other critics, merely or primarily because they felt themselves compelled to identify Clement the writer mentioned by Hermas with Clement the bishop, and therefore must even attribute an unnatural sense to these troublesome passages. Under my theory that torture of witnesses is avoided. The date of the letter may be discussed without embarrassment by the dragging weight of such a presumption. To this question I now turn, omitting some points covered in the preceding discussion.

1. It must be conceded, to start with, that the attribution of the letter to a Clement may have been the result of a mere conjecture resting on nothing but the mention of that name in the *Shepherd* as of the official representative of the Roman Church in its foreign correspondence. Therefore it is improper to base any primary argument in regard to the date of the letter on the probable date of the *Shepherd* of Hermas.

2. The letter is known to have been in existence as early as about the middle of the second century (cf. Hegesippus). That establishes a *terminus ante quem* for its composition, but not a very precise one. A *terminus a quo* is not so definitely to be fixed. But—

3. All trace of rivalry and quarrel, such as had arisen in St. Paul's time between Jewish and Gentile Christians, appears to have vanished. But the younger generation in the Corinthian Church (*νέοι*, chap. 3. 3) has risen against its conservative elders and claimed the right to depose clergy who do not please it, and to install others (chap. 44). It does not seem likely that such a question would have arisen in the first century, while the Apostolic tradition and discipline might be expected to be yet strong, and many presbyters might still be living who were directly commissioned by the Apostles. The indication suits better the second century.

Furthermore the letter was not written in answer to an application for counsel from the Church in Corinth, but apparently *proprio motu*, on account of the public scandal that the trouble at Corinth had caused in the other Christian Churches, so far distant as Rome and even among the heathen (chaps. 1. 1; 47. 7). Thus considerable time after the inception of the trouble must be allowed for before the letter would naturally be written, and an additional time on account of certain "troubles and hindrances" (chap. 1. 1) in the Church at Rome that had delayed its preparation; how much it is impossible to say; at all events not so much that

the writer feared his communication would be out of date.

4. The age of the Apostles is past, and apparently a long time past (chaps. 5, 42-44). Presbyters in the second or third ecclesiastical generation from the Apostles, perhaps even farther removed, are in office (chap. 44). The messengers that carry the letter to the Corinthians were perhaps born into Church families, and at least have lived as Christians from youth to old age (chap. 63. 3). The Church of Corinth itself is an ancient Church (chap. 47. 6). All this suits the second century, and either not so well, or not at all, the first.

But it has been argued that the letter speaks (chap. 5. 1) of the martyrdom of Sts. Peter and Paul as having taken place "in our own generation," and therefore the letter should at least be ascribed to the first century. To this it is certainly sufficient to answer that "our own generation" means nothing more than "our own times," and the writer is contrasting these with the ages far past, of Abel and Moses and David. It does not follow that the martyrdoms referred to took place in his own lifetime. On the other hand, it is almost inconceivable that if the death of the Apostles were a living memory in the writer's mind he would have referred to them in such extremely vague and inconclusive language. It would be quite inconceivable that the legendary pope Clement, himself an immediate disciple and ordinate of St. Peter, and according to one story the first bishop of Rome, appointed by the Apostle himself, should have so phrased the reference. The writer must have been as far removed from the event as the second century. Indeed I am far from convinced that he means to say that Sts. Peter and Paul suffered the death of martyrs. Μαρτυρήσας, used of each of them, often means in this age, and certainly sometimes in this letter, no more than "bearing witness for the truth," and the writer emphasises the *repeated*

sufferings of each as establishing their claim to places among the blessed. They certainly did not die more than once apiece—though they may indeed have been "in deaths oft."[1] He does not say or even intimate (unless his reference to "our generation" and "those who contended nearest us" can be stretched to mean this) that the Apostles died in Rome. It might be without prejudice inferred that he thought St. Paul had gone "to the limit of the West" (Spain)[2] and died there. I have no question that he mentions these two Apostles as the two best known to Christian readers of Acts and Epistles—the evident chiefs of their revered order. He of course knew that they must both be dead, and dead in comparatively modern times, but he appears to me to have no definite notions about the circumstances of their death. Of their sufferings and patience he had himself read in Acts and Epistles, and from those books he derived his statement. He is certainly far removed from the generation that saw the Apostles. (It is quite unjustifiable to cite him in support of the later local traditions concerning their death and burial-places in Rome.)

Again it is argued that chapter 44 indicates that men ordained by the Apostles were yet living and in service at Corinth. On the other hand, the writer appears to me to say merely that the Apostles ordained certain men (not only at Corinth) and commissioned them to hand on the succession to others; all the succeeding classes of presbyters derived their ultimate authority from the Apostles; and it was as unlawful to depose any of these presbyters ordained by such

[1] One is reminded of the language used by the Churches of Lyons and Vienne about their martyred brethren (*apud* Eus. *H.E.* v. 2 [211]), *οὐχ ἅπαξ οὐδὲ δὶς ἀλλὰ πολλάκις μαρτυρήσαντες.*

[2] To the ancients, with their erroneous ideas about longitudes, the "limit of the West" was certainly Spain (see my article "On Certain Ancient Errors in Geographical Orientation," with accompanying map, in the *Classical Journal*, xii. 88 ff.). But I take it that the writer of the letter knew nothing of St. Paul after the last mention of him in the book of Acts, and merely conjectured that he must have been released from his bonds, and have carried out his earlier intention of visiting Spain after Rome (cf. Rom. 15. 24, 28).

delegated commission as it would be to depose men who were ordained by the Apostles in person.

5. The writer of the letter is thoroughly familiar with the Epistle to the Hebrews, which he frequently quotes. If that epistle was indeed written late in the first century, the indication would, to my mind, better suit the second century as the time of the letter to the Corinthian Church. I cannot agree with one of my more learned colleagues that there must be a close chronological and causal relation between the two letters. Nor am I able to share his feeling that the sayings of Jesus quoted in chapters 13 and 46 have the flavour of pure oral tradition and cannot be explained as "a conflation of written Gospel material."

6. There is no indication in the letter of any distinction in title or rank between episcopate and presbyterate, or of any current argument about the matter, either at Rome or at Corinth. That might equally well fit a date in the latter part of the first century, or one not too far advanced toward the middle of the second. But some critics interpret the warning in Hermas (*Vis.* iii. 9. 7-10; *Mand.* xi. 12; *Sim.* viii. 7. 4) as indicating that there was already beginning in the Roman Church at that time a dispute concerning relative rank of bishops and presbyters, and therefore they would affirm that the letter in question must be assigned a date certainly earlier than that of the *Shepherd*. The argument appears somewhat infirm, since the contention about precedence need not refer to the question between episcopate and presbyterate. Deacons versus priests, or even priests of indubitably the same order among themselves, might have found temptations to discussion.

7. The lack in the letter of allusion to Gnosticism, which had begun to be prominent before the middle of the second century and is referred to by Hermas, is interpreted by some as another indication that the letter considerably preceded the composition of the

Shepherd; but neither is any other doctrinal error mentioned in the letter, which, with all its pious divagations for illustrative purposes, has just the one question of the Corinthian scandal to deal with. It is not strange that heresies do not appear in it, whatever the precise date of the book relative to that of Hermas.

8. But if the letter was actually written before the *Shepherd*, it seems hardly likely that it was written much earlier; for if, before Hermas wrote, the letter had already attained something of its great popularity, it appears quite probable that imitation, or at least distinct mention, of it would be found in the later work. There is no influence to be traced.

9. Some critics were disposed to take chapter 41 as plainly indicating a date of composition before the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple. But this is manifestly impossible. Nor can there be any inference drawn from the date of the final capture of the city under Hadrian (A.D. 135), even if there had been some restoration of the Temple by the Jewish insurgents. The author of the letter is simply quoting from Scripture, and has no concern, probably no knowledge, whether the Temple-worship was still being carried on or not.

10. In the very first sentence of the letter the writer says that its preparation has been delayed by "unexpected and repeated troubles and hindrances" (thus I should translate, reading περιστάσεις with the Constantinople MS., and interpreting by *impedimenta* of the ancient Latin version). This innocent and rather commonplace sentence has already been sufficiently discussed in the chapter of this book that treats of the alleged persecution of Christians by Domitian (pp. 159 ff.), and it is sufficient at this point merely to refer to that passage.

I have pointed out in the chapter just cited that there is no possibility that there was actually such a persecution of the Church in Rome as that commonly

attributed to Domitian. But even if my conclusion on that point could possibly be erroneous, there is no possible justification for interpreting these words of the letter to the Corinthians as alluding to any such event. The natural reference of them to some internal matters of a troublesome but less tragic nature is intrinsically and alone perfectly satisfactory, and the otherwise indicated dating of the letter from the second century, instead of from the last decade of the first, is not interfered with, but rather assisted, thereby.

11. The final question that I must briefly discuss is connected with the relation between the extant letter of Polycarp and that ascribed to Clement. It is claimed that verbal similarities between the two prove beyond a doubt that Polycarp, when he wrote to the Philippians, must have had the other letter before him. Considerable lists of parallelisms have been collected by various critics, the fullest perhaps by Bishop Lightfoot.[1] Some of these parallelisms are merely trivial and undeserving of consideration. They are accidents of the commonest kind. Very many, to say the least, of the rest appear to me to be merely such coincidences as would naturally be expected in the writing of two men not far separated in time, both steeped in biblical ideas and phraseology, and both writing exhortations. But even if it be conceded that there is here direct imitation, the passages certainly do not show which writer copied from the other. This elementary consideration appears quite naturally to have been disregarded by those critics who start with the notion that 1 *Clement* must be ascribed to the last years of the first century. (Some of them appear to me to confuse sadly the distinction between primary and corroborative evidence.) But there is clearly no evidence in these parallelisms that points to 1 *Clement* as necessarily written before *Polycarp to the Philippians*. The otherwise indicated assignment of 1 *Clement* to a date con-

[1] In his *S. Clement of Rome*, i. pp. 149 ff.

siderably later than that usually ascribed to the letter of Polycarp is not thereby vitiated.

Within the limits of time and probability indicated above, any estimate of the date of composition of 1 *Clement* must be in some degree conjectural. I should be inclined to assign it to the neighbourhood of A.D. 140, not far removed in time from the *Shepherd* of Hermas, but perhaps rather a little before than a little after it. But I am not especially concerned with the precise date of the letter, since my main theses are not conditioned thereupon. The three points of my particular interest are these: (1) whenever the letter was written, there is no evidence in it of any persecution of the Christian Church in Rome by Domitian; (2) the letter may have been written by a Clement (presumably then the man mentioned by Hermas), but the ascription to him may be due to a mere second-century conjecture (perhaps first made by Hegesippus); (3) the reputed bishop Clement probably never had an actual existence.

CHAPTER X

SOME EXTERNAL ASPECTS OF THE CHURCH IN THE FOURTH CENTURY

It may be doubted whether from the standpoint of political history the fourth century after Christ marks properly the end of the ancient era and the beginning of the Middle Ages. But from the standpoint of the observer of the Church in the Roman world I feel quite certain that the fourth century is the true dividing point. Old things have passed away; all things are becoming—not exactly new, for Rome was not fond of plainly revolutionary novelties—but at any rate, old things are being made over. The characteristic marks of the Middle Ages are strongly impressed upon the Church in the fourth century. I must not attempt to detail them. The list would be too long for this place and this topic. Some of them will be recognised in what I shall summarily describe as I go on.

There is a manifest temptation to treat the Church of the fourth century in a succession of brief biographies—her crown glitters with such a thick-set succession of bright jewels—saintly and strenuous Ambrose of Milan; sturdy Hosius of Cordova; Hilary of Poitiers, keen theologian and the earliest of the known Latin hymn-writers; great and majestic Augustine of Hippo; Eusebius of Caesarea, first historian of the Church, biographer of Constantine, fertile theologian, compiler of chronological tables to which we still have to resort; Eusebius of Nicomedia,

vigorous and unwearied champion of his friends and his cause; Jerome, who well combined the grace of learning with that of piety; Martin of Tours, about whose saintliness speedily gathered a halo of miracle; Basil the Great, founder of the system of Eastern monasticism that still survives; John Chrysostom, whose trumpet-tones were not always so dulcet as his name implies; the Gregories of Nazianzus and of Nyssa; and among the gallant partisans in the virulent theological strife that marked the century, the protagonists, Arius and Athanasius, and a score of other picturesque figures in their followings.

In all the galaxy of great names known to every educated man of the present day there is one vacant place. We see great bishops of world-wide influence from Spain, from Gaul, from Lombardy, from Egypt, from Syria: where is there an equally great bishop of Rome to take his place amid the illustrious choir? I venture to say that the average classicist would be able to mention none, unless his mind should fondly turn to Damasus, devotee of the martyrs, singing their praises in hymns, tracing out their resting-places in the Christian cemeteries of Rome, and adorning them with still extant verse-inscriptions carved in an ornate alphabet devised for the purpose. The student of Roman antiquity may well have an affectionate regard for Pope Damasus; but Damasus was not a great bishop like those I have cited. No really great name, in the sense in which those others are great, appears among the bishops of Rome in the fourth century, though, as I shall say later, the foundations of the greatness of the Roman see were laid at this time. The most striking figure among the Roman bishops of the century is Liberius, who, however, was so far disregardful of his proper infallibility when pronouncing on matters of the faith as to declare for the Arian heresy and excommunicate Athanasius. But Liberius afterward repented, recanted, and bore good witness for the truth.

And for his great influence in the local history of the see of Rome, which secured for him a strikingly long biography in the *Liber Pontificalis*, one must not forget Silvester.

But I must turn away from the temptation to even brief biography, and try to mention a few of the general, and chiefly exterior, traits of the life of the Church at this period.

The early fourth century, as every schoolboy knows, saw what is called the "Peace of the Church," or the "Victory of the Church." When Christianity began to attract attention in the Roman world, the prevailing attitude of statesmen toward it may fairly be summed up as one of contemptuous tolerance soon mixed with grave misgivings. No religion thus far professed by denizens of the Roman empire was likely to call upon them for any obedience that could impair their civic loyalty. By the second half of the second century Roman officials had learned that of all extant sectaries Christians and Jews alone owned allegiance to a power higher than the State, to a King greater than Caesar, to a God who required exclusive worship. The Jew, however, enjoyed by long precedent a certain sort of immunity which the Christian could not claim. Moreover, Judaism was not an actively proselyting faith, while Christianity was zealously and rapidly gathering in adherents. Again, it is the unknown that is to be feared. Rome knew from experience what to count upon from the Jews—petty irritations, local riots and uprisings, nothing especially dangerous. But from the Christians with their swiftly growing numbers and their intolerant tenets what might not come? To their religious faith the Roman statesman or official was entirely indifferent, but about their divided loyalty he justly had fears. The emperor-cult was the one centre of imperial unity; it furnished the one test of civic loyalty; and to that test the Christians refused to submit. The rescripts of Trajan and Hadrian

marked the extreme limit to which the Roman authorities were willing to go in toleration. The Christians met even them with stubborn resistance. The issue was certainly drawn with great clearness. As a result there were from time to time what the Christians called persecutions. They were not directed against the Christian religion as a religion, but against it only as a cover for certain political implications and reservations, against the *imperium in imperio*.

Persecution failed to discourage or to reform Christianity. It throve apace. The blood of martyrs was the seed of the Church. And Galerius in 311, followed by Constantine and Licinius in 313, brought the Age of the Persecutions to an end by a sweeping edict of toleration. Every man was now to be free to worship his own gods in his own way. So came the "Peace of the Church," or the "Victory of the Church." But though it may be viewed as a peace with victory, it was a victory without peace. The Christians desired toleration for themselves, but they had not the slightest disposition or intention, now that power was in their hands, to tolerate heathenism or heresy. "God forbid," said that old Puritan Governor Winthrop, "God forbid that I should be so careless about the truth as to be tolerant of error." He might have been a Christian of the fourth century. No sooner were the Christians free from persecution themselves than they began straightway to persecute their heathen neighbours. Not content with trampling on the heathen, they turned against their own brethren who were suspected or convicted of holding heretical doctrines. The Peace of the Church brought anything but peace. The fourth century was full of ecclesiastical turbulence. Bishops "proved their doctrines orthodox by apostolic blows and knocks." Distinct damnations were formulated by the dozen and hurled against theological adversaries. Shrieks of anathema rent the quivering air. Cities were distracted by violent and

howling mobs. Bishops were driven from their sees and into exile by the help of the civil authority; they were recalled and received in triumph; they were driven forth again and again recalled; sometimes the alternating process went on half a dozen times. Not banishment only, and fines, and loss of right to receive and convey property, but even death was visited upon religious opponents. The result was perhaps the survival of the fittest, but the evolutionary process is repulsive. Persecution is, to be sure, a sign of life, but that is all that can safely be said in its defence. The age of the formal persecutions of the Church ended with the dawn of the fourth century; the age of persecutions by the Church promptly began then.

It must in all fairness be conceded that the persecution directed against the heathen was in one important particular more humane than that conducted by the Christians against their own brethren. The pagan religions lost their favoured position, and measures of repression, tending to increase in severity, were put in action against them. The aim of the Christians was of course to crush out paganism, and in this they were supported more or less consistently by the imperial authority. But there are few, if any, acts of harshness *recorded* toward individuals who yet adhered to the old faiths. Great names of zealous and notorious pagans occur in the annals of public life all through the century. The emperors appear to have protected the individual from Christian hostility, while the cults were being steadily repressed. This was of course a wise as well as a humane policy. As a result, the end of the century saw paganism an insignificant factor in imperial society. The Victory of the Church was consummated at that time. Julian's short-lived attempt at the restoration of a philosophic paganism left no trace behind it.

But while acting as a buffer between the Church and individual partisans of the old faiths, the emperors

apparently did not in general feel bound to protect Christians from one another. They let the Church rage as it would against its own heretical members, and lent it the active support of the temporal power. To be sure, there was often a vacillation in imperial favour between the chief parties in the Church, but there was little or no attempt to restrain the virulent animosities of the one to which the emperor for the time inclined. And the latter part of the century saw a painful tendency toward the establishment of the mediaeval theory that heretics are properly to be punished with death. It was yet embodied more in threat than in actual practice, and such death penalties as had been inflicted were for the most part either instances of what may be called lynch-law, or else nominally covered by charges of crimes long ranked as capital, such as witchcraft and treason. The earliest years of the following century—perhaps the last years of this—beheld local bishops in the West vested with certain civil authority in their respective dioceses, especially in the matter of the suppression of heresy by civil pains and penalties; and a most ominous precedent of what later ages beheld in the Holy Office of the Inquisition was the appointment late in the fourth century of an imperial commission with inquisitorial authority for the detection of heresy. Was not this the beginning of the Dark Ages?

Despite the warm eulogies pronounced by Eusebius of Caesarea on his imperial friend and patron, it must remain doubtful whether Constantine during the earlier part of his reign was a convinced Christian at heart, though he was probably a monotheist. But Constantine was first of all a far-seeing and constructive statesman. He realised the tremendous advantage—the necessity—of having the Christian Church not in the constant and implacable opposition, but among the supporters of government.

The old Roman religion, or religions, had contri-

buted no organised support to the civil power, because they had no organised general constitution apart from that of the State. Even the emperor-cult, favoured and upheld as a bond of political unity, had failed to accomplish its desired end. The Christian Church was a unique and imposing phenomenon in Roman society. It had found the mass of its earlier adherents among the poor and lowly of this world. But by the beginning of the fourth century all this was changed. Christianity counted its members now among all classes of the population. And it was a body outside the State, indeed, but of thoroughly efficient organisation. That the majority of the inhabitants of the Roman world were now Christians is, to be sure, very improbable; but if not in the majority, Christians formed, like the prohibitionists of to-day, a large, enthusiastic, organised, active, efficient, and therefore predominant minority. Their communities, centred about their local bishops, thickly dotted the map from Abyssinia and Assyria to farthest Britain. They not only exchanged information and advice one with another, but they had also learned to act together in local councils, which drew from large areas, and legislated on matters of faith and order.

Constantine discerned the advantage of winning for the State the hearty support of this vast and inevitably growing corporate power. But in order to secure this end there must be the offer of a sufficient *quid pro quo*. This must evidently include not merely toleration (that had already been conceded), not merely recognition, protection, and the right to hold corporate property, but the reinforcement of the ecclesiastical by the temporal authority—something beyond what the Roman State had ever before undertaken in matters of religion.

It is difficult to say what the accepted theory of the Christians at the beginning of the fourth century was concerning the proper interrelation of Church and

State. Probably they had developed no systematic theory at all on the matter. Their position in the body politic had been too unsafe to prompt them to formulate such philosophical doctrines. During the times of persecution they had met the attacks of their aroused adversaries by warm and justified assertions that a Christian could be and was also a good citizen. They were wont to claim that they duly reverenced the laws and the civil magistrate, and were ready to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. But now that the times of their humiliation were accomplished, they were quick to grasp every advantage that offered. If Caesar now stood ready in his turn to render unto God the things that are God's, not only in a personal but in an official way, why should they not gladly welcome the new régime? Circumstances were changed since their great orator Tertullian, a bare century earlier, had asserted that the idea of a Christian emperor was a contradiction in terms.

Whether the Christians were influenced in the arrangement which they accepted by the recollection of the Jewish theocratic state is unknown, but seems quite possible. What they got was not, to be sure, a theocratic state—that would have been foreign to the Roman mind, and still more so to the mind of a Constantine—but they got what was even more new, though not quite so revolutionary in Roman concept—the position of an established Church, with the practical outlawry of dissent and heresy. Of course I do not mean that any Peace Commission sat and established such a League as this, but that within the century it worked out in this way so readily, if not harmoniously, that it is impossible to suppose that none of the great minds of the age were conscious of what they were effecting, though they could hardly have foreseen its consequences.

Whatever evils there are in such an " establishment of religion " fell upon the fourth-century Church—

loss of legitimate autonomy and of the power of purely spiritual appeal, deadening of spirituality, increase in worldliness, involution in political intrigue, dry-rot of formalism, growth of membership by other than the attraction of religious truth, and all the other ills of a politically privileged position of a Church, such as we hear something about in certain quarters at the present day.

For the thorough working out of Constantine's design he perceived that the Church must be a united body, in spirit as well as in form. Heresy, threatening or issuing in schism, was not unknown even in St. Paul's day. It had lifted its head here and there more assertively in the centuries that had followed. Local Church Councils had failed to secure doctrinal unity and harmonious action. The West (except Africa) was at the time tolerably quiet, but the East was, as usual, in turmoil. Two parties—those later connected with the names of Arius and Athanasius respectively—were in a fiery quarrel about the divine origin and nature of the Prince of Peace—a quarrel that some scorner later remarked turned upon the presence or absence of a single iota in a long and unintelligible word.

Local Councils here and there, composed primarily of bishops, but shared in also by other clergy, and sometimes by laymen, had often enough met and authoritatively defined matters of belief and provisions of discipline. One of these, a council of churches of the West only, had been summoned by Constantine himself to meet at Arles in 314 (or 315). Its main object was to settle a very threatening disturbance, political as well as ecclesiastical, raised in Africa by the persons later called Donatists from the name of their leader. It also passed important canons on other matters; but constitutionally it is noteworthy as establishing the precedent of the calling by the emperor of a great Church Council, as distinct from

a small group of arbitrators. Incidentally the Council of Arles is interesting to us as revealing the first glimmer of light from the darkness that envelops the beginnings of Christianity in Britain. British representatives crossed the Channel and traversed Gaul to attend the Council—the bishops of London, of York, and of one other see that is uncertain. It may have been Colchester or Lincoln. These three bishops were accompanied by a priest and a deacon, who seem to have been regarded equally with the bishops as members of the Council.

Encouraged by the precedent of this former action, Constantine now boldly summoned by his imposing authority as emperor the first general council of the entire Christian Church throughout all the world. It was to meet at Nicaea, and to determine under his patronage the Arian and other questions, that after such official definition by authority of the whole Church, peace and unity might prevail in all her borders. It is not likely that Constantine cared very much about what doctrine should come off victorious in the discussions and votes. He did not aspire, like Henry VIII. of England, to be a theologian. But he wanted harmony in the Church for political reasons. Lingering heresy and schism could be put down by the strong arm, but it was necessary in the first place, by determining the judgement or will of the majority, to find out what is heresy and what orthodoxy.

The Council of Nicaea in 325, the first General Council of the Church, among other things formally determined that matter of the iota, and embodied its findings in what, though it reached its final form at a later date, is commonly called the Nicene Creed. It thus established a supreme article of the faith in the verbal form in which it is recited and believed at the present day all over the world by almost all Christians who understand anything of theology, and by the immense majority of those who, as is perfectly proper

and reasonable, believe and recite without understanding.

The fourth century would be most noteworthy in the history of the Church, if nothing more could be said of it than that it witnessed this first General Council. But one thing more must be remarked about the theory of the general council before I leave the subject. The notion of such a gathering as a supreme legislative authority for the whole Church was initiated then, and we probably have Constantine himself chiefly to thank for it. The Fathers of Nicaea did, indeed, invoke the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their deliberations (though they appear to have reclined rather more confidently on the secular arm), but none of them, either then or afterward, claimed that the acts of the Council were infallible or irreformable. That was a theory of much later development. Constantine himself did not hold it. He doubtless hoped in advance that decisions might be reached acceptable to both sides, and even after the dissolution of the Council he continued to hope that opposition would settle down.

The West, always more quiet and less given to theological passions than the East, accepted the determinations of the Council with substantial readiness and unanimity. But the East continued to rant and riot. Constantine's well-devised plan did not secure peace and unity, and he himself showed so little indication of regarding the conciliar decrees as binding in even their legal aspect that he veered around from Nicaea to the favouring of Arianism, though he finally died in what must now be called the orthodox faith. His Christian successors also were not consistent and unanimous in their allegiance and support. Valens, indeed, was a bitter Arian, but was fairly balanced by his successor, the great Theodosius, who leaned as strongly to the other side.

In the reign of the latter emperor was held (in 381)

the Second General Council, that of Constantinople, which reaffirmed and practically completed the Nicene Creed in nearly its present form, adding especially the full definition of belief in the Holy Ghost, but with the affirmation that He "proceedeth from the Father" instead of "proceedeth from the Father and the Son." This addition, familiar to us in the present Western form of the Creed, was perhaps first made by a Spanish council in the late sixth century, though its history is not perfectly clear. At any rate, it was definitely accepted in the West within the next few centuries. But though it is held in the West to be plainly in accord with Scripture, and not theologically irreconcilable with the Constantinopolitan formula, it is still regarded by the Eastern Churches as an unwarrantable and schismatic, if not heretical statement. By the end of the fourth century Arianism had substantially disappeared from all but the fringes of the Roman world. On the outskirts of Europe it continued to exert a great influence, until it finally succumbed to the determined orthodoxy of the Church of Rome and its increasing control. Of the less threatening heresies that were combated in the fourth century I must forbear to speak.

The fourth century saw also the rise of monasticism. It originated in Egypt, then a great centre of population and of religious zeal, not always accompanied by knowledge and discretion. Its great early figure and reputed founder was Anthony, and its type was eremitic, involving perfect solitude and isolation of the individual, who devoted himself solely to prayer, meditation, and the extreme mortification of the body for the benefit of the soul. No wonder that Anthony saw visions! Hundreds or thousands of others were inspired by his example, and adopted the same mode of solitary life, forming no organised religious community, even when many of them settled in the same neighbourhood. This step of organisation was taken,

however, early in the century by Pachomius, another Egyptian, who united the religious in communities under a common rule combining a life of prayer with one of work. Thus was founded the first Christian monastic order, with a centralised organisation—a plan that was never adopted elsewhere in the East, and did not appear even in the West till the establishment centuries later of such bodies as the Cluniacs, Cistercians, and the great orders of mendicant friars. In Syria there was at first the tendency to the solitary life accompanied by great austerities. Symeon Stylites is its best known and typical figure. In Greek-speaking lands a better model was introduced by Eustathius and developed later by Basil, who is regarded as the founder of the Greek monasticism that has lasted to the present day. He inculcated no great bodily austerities, taught (as Pachomius had done) that work should accompany prayer, but organised monks into local communities without formal interdependence and central government. He prescribed also no fixed rule of life, but rather furnished a model from which the local communities varied considerably in detail. This became the Eastern model for the monastic life, but never prevailed in the West.

Monasticism is said to have been introduced to the West by Athanasius, on his visit to Rome in 339 in company with two Egyptian monks. His ideal was apparently that of Anthony (a somewhat peculiar ideal to be held by a man as actively involved in the world as Athanasius, unless it were as a natural reaction against the troubles of the world that he had experienced), and the life of the Egyptian saint attributed to him was translated into Latin for the better instruction of the Western churches. The practice of the eremitic life spread somewhat in Italy, and even penetrated into other western lands; but it never throve in the West. Possibly the climate, certainly the temperament of the people, was opposed to extreme asceticism. But

monastic life of the community type gained a strong footing in Italy and Gaul in the second half of the fourth century. It had spread into Africa, and apparently was making some headway even in Spain, though this is a matter about which much uncertainty prevails. Early in the history of these bodies there is visible one of the traditional marks of temperamental difference between East and West. The Eastern communities were more individualistic, content with general adherence to an accepted model, but shaping their customs and regulations independently, according to local circumstances. The Western communities had a more legalistic temperament, and inclined to the adoption of a detailed and uniform rule, even long before the time of regularly constituted orders.

Communities of women as well as of men are found in all quarters of the Christian world from the earliest days of the monastic system in each locality. Indeed, some sort of a religious society of women is mentioned as existing in Egypt even before the time of Pachomius. As might be expected, women in both East and West entered upon the religious community life apparently with even more eager enthusiasm than did men.

Yet it cannot be said that monasticism played an important part during the fourth century in the outer life of the Church as a whole, however much it may have fostered a sense of devotion, and thus have helped to counteract the tendency to ecclesiastical politics and the lamentable secularisation of religion. In Egypt it was an influential factor, but the system of life was yet too young to be of controlling influence elsewhere. Its birth and the varying phases of its early development alone need be noted in any cursory review like this.

Another contemporary expression of religious emotion needs at least brief notice, partly because it culminated in great movements during the late Middle Ages, and partly because it was the beginning of an

impulse that is not yet spent. I refer to pilgrimages to the Holy Land. It is easy to say that any pretext will serve as an excuse for gratifying that human curiosity about foreign things that leads to travel. But at that period we do not hear of much general movement from place to place or country to country for the sake merely of travel. We do hear of pilgrimages. The marked increase of them in the fourth century was the natural outcome of the broadening outlook, of the new freedom in a nominally Christianised world. Though there may have been from the earliest days after the Peace of the Church some of the convenient elements of a Cook's Tour about them, the period of full development of personally conducted parties, and of the compilation of brief guidebooks for the benefit of the travellers, must be ascribed to a somewhat later date. But the general movement of earnest and pious desire to visit and worship at the sites consecrated by the bodily presence of the Son of Man, which culminated in the Crusades, began in the fourth century. And Jerusalem is still, and will continue to be, as Mecca and Medina are for the Mohammedan, the goal of pilgrimages that in essential character must be much like those of the fourth and following centuries.

The Canon of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament, framed according to the Palestinian tradition, had been generally accepted by the Christian Church before the fourth century. The Canon of the Greek Scriptures, the New Testament, was finally determined within that period. The fact is well known, but yet interesting, that this determination was not effected by action of any General Council, but through a gradually developing consensus of Christian scholars and churches in East and West alike. Athanasius had a great hand in it, and the Roman Church is fond of pointing to a synodical formulation of the Canon passed under Damasus in a local Council held at Rome

in 382, in which Jerome lent the great authority of his support to the strong Athanasian tradition. Under the growing influence of the Roman Church other Western synods followed suit, though in the East some variation continued for a considerable time. There was more doubt about the so-called apocryphal writings. The fourth-century Christians, even though they finally excluded all of them alike from the accepted Canon of Scripture, were quite lacking in unanimity of opinion regarding the character and use of these books, which lay on the borderland between the sacred and the profane, and had received some ecclesiastical recognition. Nor were they agreed even about the meaning of the word apocrypha. Some of the books thus classified continued to be more or less in church use. On the later history of them I need not touch.

The fourth century witnessed also the final settlement of important matters concerning the constitution of the Church, both in theory and in practice. The definite differentiation of the episcopate from the presbyterate, and the recognition of the bishop as the ruler in the local church, appears to date from the second century. But no universally accepted theory of difference of order between bishop and presbyter was established for at least two centuries more. The dawn of the fourth century found in the churches three ranks of higher officers—bishops, priests, and deacons—and subordinate to these a list of other functionaries—subdeacons, acolytes, readers, exorcists, and the like—who appear to have varied in number and estimation in different churches. The "establishment" of the Church in the Empire naturally led to deeper consideration of what the nature of the Church is, and what the proper status and character of its officers. There was not then—there never was through all the centuries down to comparatively modern times—any suggestion of the giving up of any one of the three higher offices; but

there was a growth of the conception of Holy Order, and a question of just what the relation in regard to Holy Order was in which these three offices stood one to another. The bishop was the proper head of the local church; that was and had long been universally conceded. No question was raised about it. He was both a spiritual and an administrative officer. In the former aspect the priest stood in close neighbourhood to him, in the latter aspect the deacon, who was appointed originally to administrative functions as an assistant to the Apostles ("to serve tables"), whose supervisory authority was regarded as having descended to the bishops. As the highest spiritual function of the ministry was the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice, and the priest could now do this as well as the bishop, the question naturally arose whether the two were not equal in order, though not in office. Similarly the deacon had arisen to assert his essential equality with the presbyter. And this was not a matter of pure theory only. The deacon rather than the presbyter had become the especial adviser and companion of the bishop (Athanasius was only a deacon when he accompanied his bishop from Alexandria to the Council of Nicaea). And in the early fourth century the pretensions of the deacon had gone so far that, for one example only, the Council of Arles had to tell the Church of Rome that deacons must not be allowed to consecrate the Eucharist, though they might, of course, distribute to the faithful the elements consecrated by bishop or priest. In the course of the fourth century these questions were practically settled for all Christendom. Under the influence probably of the civil *cursus honorum* the functions of Church officials were arranged in a strictly graded hierarchy, up which the cleric passed from step to step in due succession till he reached mayhap the episcopate itself. But though this practical arrangement was very generally accepted

in the Christian world, there was still question about the parity of episcopate and presbyterate as orders, and at the very end of the century as great men as Jerome and Ambrosiaster, while insisting that the deacon is of lower order than the priest, yet contended that in order bishop and priest are fundamentally equal. The consensus of the Church in later centuries is regarded as settling the matter.

The tendency to the establishment of a strictly graded hierarchy did not, however, prevent clergy from rising occasionally from a lower to a higher place, either *per saltum*, or at least without tarrying at the intermediate steps. Thus the deacon Athanasius became bishop of Alexandria; more than once a deacon was made bishop of Rome; Ambrose within a single week was baptized and raised to the episcopate in Milan; and Nectarius of Constantinople made a similar meteor flight from lay communion to the episcopate. Jerome and Augustine did not pass through the orders below the priesthood. Evidently, as the Roman emperor might by a legal fiction abate some of the delays in the *cursus honorum*, so the Church might act on occasion, ruling doubtless, if the ordination was *per saltum*, that the higher order included the lower.

Bishops were consecrated by bishops only (despite the Arian slanders about a different usage in Alexandria), and Councils of the fourth century repeatedly decreed that the consecration must be performed by at least three bishops, thus, of course, assuring the validity of the succession, and emphasising the right of the Church in general to exercise some control through its representatives over the elevation of men to the supreme office. They were apparently still elected by the people; but the voice of the presbyters, to whom was certainly due in justice some part in the selection of their ecclesiastical head, at first was needed to approve the popular choice; and

probably by the end of the century the process had begun that led to the inversion of functions of clergy and laity in episcopal elections, the clergy electing, and the populace being asked only to express approval of the designation. For the growth of the Christian populations, and the unavoidable interposition of a strictly defined hierarchy between people and bishop, must have led to a separation of the chief pastor from immediate and intimate contact with his flock, such as present-day bishops join with the ancient in lamenting. Before the end of the fourth century bishops of adjacent sees, who must join in the consecration of the bishop designate, are also found claiming and exercising the right of approval of his election; and there are asserted to be traces in certain localities of the actual election being in their hands.

The fourth century saw also, with the growth of the Christian communities and the unembarrassed development of organisation after the Peace of the Church, another step in practical administration that has lasted to the present day. Dioceses lying near to that of a large city had been tending, probably by no synodical action, but by such a voluntary affiliation as had led to the holding of various local Councils, to draw together in a sort of informal union around the central see and yield it a precedence of honour. Dioceses at a greater distance from such large centres might still in similar fashion group themselves together. The civil division of the empire for administrative purposes seems to have suggested in general the natural demarcation of these ecclesiastical areas, and gave them not merely boundaries but the name of provinces. In this instance also, as in many others, the political model served for the shaping of the ecclesiastical figure. At least the former of the two sorts of grouping mentioned had begun even before the fourth century. It had existed about Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, the three greatest sees of

the age; and the Council of Nicaea ordered that within the areas of which these cities of Alexandria and Antioch were the acknowledged heads, and also in "other provinces" not specified, the "ancient customs" regarding the superior status of the metropolitan bishop should be preserved, "since the same is customary for the bishop of Rome." Just what these "ancient customs" were it is impossible to say, but it is certain that they involved no recognition of a spiritual authority vested in any metropolitical see. As other Nicaean canons provided that the election of a bishop to a see within a given province should be subject to the approval of its metropolitan and of the other bishops of the province, and that the metropolitan and his suffragans should, if possible, all act (but at the very least three of them) in the consecration of the newly elected; and, further, that a person holding himself to be unjustly excommunicated by his bishop might appeal for revision of judgement to the provincial synod over which the metropolitan would preside, it may well be that these provisions summarised the extent to which the formal metropolitical authority had thus far developed. The full establishment of the provincial system, and the general extension of the title and authority of metropolitans and archbishops, to say nothing of patriarchs and popes, runs over into another century.

And finally—for this is the last topic that I must permit myself to touch upon—in the fourth century were laid the foundations of the mediaeval supremacy of the Roman see, particularly in the West, and so later throughout a large part of the world.

From about the middle of the second century, which is the earliest date to which the legend of St. Peter's presence in Rome can definitely be traced, the Church of Rome had been called, and had proudly called itself, the Church of Sts. Peter and Paul. As such, and also as the greatest and only Apostolic see

of the West, planted in the capital of the empire, it had occasionally been appealed to as the sure guardian of the Apostolic faith and order. Not Rome alone, but Alexandria and Antioch (the former not claiming an immediate Apostolic founder), and later even Constantinople, were thus cited as indefectible repositories and witnesses of the truth. Evidently the importance of these respective Churches, due to their size and to the dignity of their cities, was the chief factor in winning for them this exceptional Christian recognition. Nor is there any sure indication that before the fourth century any bishop of Rome had claimed, or any one had claimed for him, that by virtue of his alleged ecclesiastical descent from St. Peter he had inherited any spiritual right of jurisdiction superior to that of other bishops. His position among the Churches outside of his province was one of recognised honour, not of authority.

By the establishment of the Church, and the distinct favour of Constantine and his successors, the bishops, particularly of the more important cities of the empire, became great personages, and not merely great ecclesiastics. Rome was the venerated capital of the old empire, "the sacred city." Around her gathered all the sentimental reverence of the West, and to a considerable extent of the East also. The see of Rome was clearly recognised as not merely the oldest but the greatest see of the Western world. After the removal of the capital to New Rome, and the consequent draining away of much of the senatorial order, the bishop of Rome stood plainly forth as the uncontested representative of all the majesty bequeathed by the vanished past. I say nothing of the pretended Donations of Constantine or of the False Decretals, as I suppose no scholar, even the most zealous ultramontane, would now think of taking them seriously. Nothing more than the natural sequence of events was needed to establish in the West the commanding

position of the Roman see. It would have been impossible for any bishop of Rome not to be conscious of the grandeur of his unique place and history. It would have been unnatural for him to be so unpatriotic as not to seek to enhance it. Only a few steps in the process of aggrandisement can here be mentioned.

In the first place, as the Council of Nicaea recognised, from an unknown time the bishop of Rome had exercised a kind of authority that was afterward called metropolitical over regions adjacent to his seat. There is some reason for supposing that up to the rise of Milan as an imperial residence this metropolitical area of Rome was regarded as extending over all of Italy, probably including the islands of Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica. Outside of this area the Roman bishop certainly exercised no jurisdiction.

The next advance was granted by the Council of Sardica in 343, a Council that was meant to be General, but became purely Western by the withdrawal from it of all the bishops of the East. Sardica passed canons providing that any bishop condemned by his provincial synod might appeal to the bishop of Rome, who was authorised at his discretion to entertain the appeal, and to grant a rehearing of the case before a commission of bishops neighbouring to the province concerned. This commission the bishop of Rome was to appoint, and he might send presbyters of his own as personal legates to sit with the bishops in this court of appeal. There is no indication that these Sardican canons aroused any opposition in the Western bishoprics thus submitted to the *maius imperium* of Rome. But, however limited in itself, it was an unprecedented step, and one of great importance constitutionally as establishing the principle that the bishop of Rome might exercise jurisdiction outside of the Italian province. This was the beginning of a Western Patriarchate, to use of this early stage the Eastern title for the authority. The East not merely

paid no attention to the acts of the Council of Sardica, but does not seem even to have informed itself about them. Africa appears to have been similarly ignorant or careless.

The next great step forward was taken in the episcopate of Damasus, which, however unimportant otherwise in the general history of the Church, marks a distinct advance movement in the Church of Rome, and that in two aspects, one of political authority, the other of spiritual. The former of these might almost be considered a retort to the action of the General Council of Constantinople, which had recognised a number of Eastern patriarchates (or *dioeceseis*, according to the use of that term in the political organisation of the empire—that is, groups of provinces), but had said nothing about Rome, beyond ruling that the bishop of Constantinople, now Patriarch, should have " precedence of honour " next to the bishop of Rome, " because Constantinople is New Rome." The retort —if it was a retort—consisted in this. In answer to the petition of a Council, probably purely of his own province, summoned by Damasus at Rome in 382 (the next year after the Council at Constantinople), the Emperor Gratian issued a constitution that granted certain extended powers to the Roman bishop, and lent the authority of civil officials to enforce them. To speak briefly, a condemned bishop might now appeal his case, not merely, as by the Sardican canon, to a commission of neighbouring bishops appointed by the bishop of Rome, but to that prelate himself (of course sitting with an episcopal *consilium*, after true classical Roman fashion); and, furthermore, the bishop of Rome might exercise similar appellate jurisdiction over other metropolitans. As to the area over which the new authority was to extend, Gratian says nothing definitely. He does, however, distinguish, not in principle but in details of procedure, between nearer and " more distant regions " (*longin-*

quiores partes). The latter phrase is admirably vague. Perhaps Damasus, and perhaps even Gratian, purposely wished it left in this form, that the patriarchal authority of the bishop of Rome might on occasion be asserted to extend over all the Christian world, as on other grounds the papal authority to-day is asserted to extend. As a fact, the Eastern part of the realm appears to have taken no notice of the imperial rescript and the possibility of far-reaching Roman claims under it, and even in the West it did not go without protest, though the history of the practical application of it lies beyond my chronological limit.

It will be noted that while the Eastern Patriarchates were duly recognised and canonically established by a General Council of the Church, this quasi-patriarchate of the West had nothing ecclesiastically better to rest upon than a local Italian Council and the civil power. Africa, Spain, Gaul, Britain, Ireland, to say nothing of all the East, were not called into consultation on the matter. Probably Damasus did not think less of his new dignity on that account. The Roman Church had become a political church.

But in spite of this application to the civil power, and the success achieved through it, a change was definitely beginning in the Roman concept, or at least in the Roman public statement, of the basis of the authority claimed by the Roman bishop. The political basis, founded upon the reverence due the first Apostolic see of the West and the capital of the empire, was being gradually abandoned ; St. Paul was being dropped out of reference in favour of his professed co-founder, St. Peter, and emphasis laid upon the alleged and then unchallenged fact that St. Peter had been himself not merely the founder but actually the first bishop of the Church of Rome. The extension of this historical claim was to the additional concept that, with the handing on of the episcopal authority to his successors in the see of

Rome, St. Peter had also handed on a divine commission conferred upon him by Christ himself to rule over the entire Christian Church. In other words, we have in the latter part of this fourth century the effective beginnings of the "Petrine claims" of the Church of Rome. They were not yet asserted in such a clear-cut and definitive formula as in later centuries, down to, for example, the Vatican Council of 1870. They were rather put in what we may call a sentimentally suggestive manner, as if the minds of the official proponents were themselves just awaking to the significance of the mighty fact. It may indeed be that such was honestly the case, that we have here a clear instance of the development of doctrine. Certain it is that in the previous centuries the Christian world was not aware that the Roman see claimed any authority over it as by divine right; equally certain that after the fourth century it could not well profess such ignorance. The fourth century was ecclesiastically, in this as in other respects, the beginning of the Middle Ages, and the chronological dividing-point between East and West, though they continued to be nominally in communion. Doubtless the fission then started between the two geographical divisions of the Church was helped on by the linguistic fact that Latin had supplanted Greek as the language of the Western Church.

CHAPTER XI

ST. PETER AND THE CHURCH IN ROME

In this essay I trust I may be permitted, without justly incurring the charge or the suspicion of the slightest intentional discourtesy, to continue to use for the present widely extended and venerable Church the same simple terms ("the Roman Church," or "the Church of Rome") that in preceding essays I have naturally employed of it in its earlier and more local history. I am of course quite willing to concede that the present imposing body is a very different thing in many essential aspects from the Church that was established in the capital of the Roman Empire. And I am also well aware that in recent times its adherents and official spokesmen have frequently by example and precept indicated their desire that it should be called "the Catholic Church," without even the addition of any other qualifying adjective. But it would appear, I think, to an entirely unconcerned student that if the title "Catholic" is exclusively used of itself by one party for its own dialectic advantage (which is of course plainly the case at the present time), the party of the other part ought not to be censured for discourtesy, if it prefers to continue the use for the same thing of a more ancient and colourless appellation. The geographical term evidently describes with accuracy, for the modern as well as for the ancient period, the Church that during all the Christian centuries (if we except the "Babylonish

captivity" at Avignon and a few much briefer and less significant interruptions) has had its centre and its throne in the proud City of the Seven Hills, and to-day, as aforetime, looks thither for the source of all authority. In point of fact the word "Catholic" itself has on the lips and in the hearts of a vast mass of "non-Catholics" even at the present day quite as invidious a connotation as "Roman," or "Romish," or "Romanist," or "papal," or "papist," all of which terms I believe "Catholics" since the Reformation have at times both heard without offence and used freely of themselves. And it may be added that the Council of Trent by no means disdained the epithet "Roman" for the Church of the Apostolic see, since in its Decrees and Canons it repeatedly speaks of "the Roman Church," or "the Holy Roman Church," without any other qualification. The same brief title, "the Roman Church," occurs even in the Acts of the Vatican Council of 1870, when, as in the case of the Tridentine formulas, a geographical designation rather than a doctrinal was convenient. Every one knows also that the official title of a cardinal is "Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae Cardinalis." We may surely excuse ourselves for not being in the matter of mere nomenclature "more Catholic than the Pope."

It is a tremendous embarrassment to the progress of free historical study and criticism to be confronted by the inert mass of any great tradition many centuries old, and accordingly thoroughly settled and embedded into its place. The embarrassment is serious enough, even when the tradition is concerned with something of purely scholastic and impersonal interest. But when it is intimately bound up with beliefs and convictions never more active and vital than at the present day, and touching upon the deepest and most important interests of the human race—its relation to God through His Church—the serious aspects of any question concerning it may well give the critic pause.

In considering the topic of this chapter it is manifestly impossible to insist that the purely historical aspects of the question may easily be isolated from the theological. The Roman Church for the past fifteen hundred years has insisted that they are indissolubly welded together. It has erected into practically an article of its faith the belief that St. Peter was given by Jesus Christ the full "power of the keys"; that he was the first bishop of the Church in Rome; and that by divine authority he bequeathed to his successors in that see till the end of time the full right, power, and duty vested in him to govern the universal Church, and to act as its infallible guide and director in all matters pertaining to faith and morals.[1] The Pope reigning for the time is no less than the real and true Vicegerent of Christ on this earth, and that by reason of his ecclesiastical descent from St. Peter. This tremendous authority is not handed down, as is the episcopal commission, through the laying-on of hands by those who already possess it and are authorised to transmit it; it is inherent in the office of the Bishop of Rome, now commonly called the Pope, and it comes to him through his mere election to, or installation in, that office. Whoever, therefore, is out of communion with the Roman see is out of communion with the Church. He is in the best event left for his eternal salvation to the uncovenanted mercies of God.[2]

This imposing edifice of ecclesiastical—or call it,

[1] The definition on this latter point set forth in the Vatican Council of 1870 is: "Docemus et diuinitus reuelatum dogma esse definimus: Romanum Pontificem, cum ex cathedra loquitur, id est, cum omnium Christianorum Pastoris et Doctoris munere fungens pro suprema sua Apostolica auctoritate doctrinam de fide uel moribus ab uniuersa Ecclesia tenendam definit, per assistentiam diuinam, ipsi in beato Petro promissam, ea infallibilitate pollere qua diuinus Redemptor Ecclesiam suam in definienda doctrina de fide uel moribus instructam esse uoluit: ideoque eiusmodi Romani Pontificis definitiones ex sese, non autem ex consensu Ecclesiae, irreformabiles esse."

[2] It is interesting to note that the Churches of the great Eastern communion hold quite as distinctly that whoever is not of their fellowship is out of communion with the Church. They accordingly excommunicate Rome precisely as Rome does the rest of the Christian world. It is perhaps also interesting to note that the Eastern Churches reject as a mere fable the notion that St. Peter ever saw Rome.

if you will, doctrinal—principles the Church of Rome has chosen to base in the ultimate issue upon a purely historical question. Of course the Roman Church calls it an indubitable historical fact. On it the whole structure rests. But the choice of the historical foundation-stone was not made by the Roman Church of recent centuries. In this matter the Church of the present day is not in appearance a free moral agent. The choice was made for it by that Church of fifteen centuries ago. It was made at a time when there was no such thing in existence as historical criticism, in any proper sense of that term. No Christian had then any motive for questioning any agreeable historical statement in the story of the early days of Christianity anywhere, if it did not palpably conflict with an already accepted narrative, or with the words of the Books that were deemed more or less authoritative. The Church was intensely interested, and had been from the first, in matters of faith and order. It felt only a mild and mainly aesthetic curiosity about purely historical questions. It had not come to see that they might be of any vital importance. It accepted freely and amiably a vast mass of imaginative historical inventions, without caring to investigate their source, while yet it debated sometimes very unamiably and jealously whatever touched upon doctrine or order. Quite baseless historical suggestions or assertions quickly passed by repetition into tradition, and were enriched by accretions of a becoming character ; and as the Church at large had a great reverence for tradition in what it thought important matters, it naturally came to extend a sort of protective regard over supposed historical traditions. Of course the stories told by the various Churches concerning their origins were true. There was no reason to doubt them, and no reason to examine the source and evolution of the beliefs.

The choice of a historical foundation-stone for the

Roman claim was not made all at once. It was the outcome of a gradual process. First came the notion, no earlier in origin than at least the middle of the second century, that Sts. Peter and Paul, the two great Apostles, had both laboured in Rome and suffered death there; then that the see of Rome, being the foundation of two Apostles, and they the greatest, and being established in the capital of the empire, ought to have the pre-eminence over other sees. This last item evidently passed beyond the purely historical into the borders of the theological field. It accordingly was not permitted to go without protest; but it gained influence among the Churches of the West, especially those which found their advantage in the support of the increasingly powerful Church of Rome. The proposition did not flourish in the East, except in so far as it was concerned with a purely honorary precedence, and was based upon merely the political position of the city of Rome, as the ancient capital of the empire. The case of the East, under its various patriarchs (Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem), over against the West, under the assertive authority of the Bishop of Rome, patriarch of the Western world, reminds one in its external aspect of the struggle between the two great leaders in the last days of the Roman republic, "one of whom could not brook a superior nor the other an equal."

If, then, the Roman Church was to establish its supremacy over all the patriarchates of the East, as well as over the West, evidently some other than a political basis must be found for its assertion of authority. There came accordingly to be a theological corollary added to the earlier historical proposition. This development of doctrine may be dated essentially from the reign of Damasus, Bishop of Rome (366–384). It reached its maturity in the century that followed. In it was embodied the theorem that the

successive bishops of Rome inherited from St. Peter the spiritual power and authority to govern and direct the universal Church. Of course the corollary was not susceptible of demonstration by historical evidence. Therein perhaps lay in great measure its safety. It could not be proved, but it could be persistently asserted, and that might finally come to have the same effect as proof.

Manifestly the theological corollary falls to the ground if the historical proposition on which it depends is false; though of course, on the other hand, the historical proposition might be true and yet the theological corollary be false. To subject the historical tradition of the connection of St. Peter with the Church in Rome to renewed examination is the purpose of this chapter. Its theological corollary must be left for discussion by theologians, with merely the remark by the historian in passing that a relation that is void *ab initio* acquires no moral authority by prescription, however long. We must discriminate between the moral and the purely legal spheres of action, between the *forum conscientiae* and the *forum legis*. The former deals with eternal things, and time to it is nothing; the latter has to set up for the uses of daily life in this world certain fictions without regard to ultimate moral foundations. The mischief is that the historical student in dealing with tradition often confuses the two spheres.

If the historical basis of the Roman claim to supremacy is false, the whole body of Roman teaching in this particular at once collapses. Under these circumstances it is evidently irrational to consider faithful adherents of the Roman Church who write on this topic as any other than partisan advocates of a belief that they are by their ecclesiastical allegiance bound to support or to pass over in silence. They cannot do otherwise. To say this is not in the least to express a doubt of their perfect sincerity of heart.

It is only to point out an obvious fact. On the other hand, it is equally evident that opponents of belief in the alleged historical fact thereby lay themselves open to a somewhat similar suspicion of morally obligatory partisanship, even though they are not confronted, in case of any other attitude on their part, with civil or ecclesiastical pains and penalties. But the situation is rendered somewhat easier for them, and the suspicion accordingly diminished, in that they might concede the purely historical "fact," but yet contest its theological corollary. That, indeed, has come to be the fashionable position among recent historical writers of the conveniently so-called Anglican Communion.

Cardinal Manning once declared (in his *Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost*) that "the appeal to antiquity [that is, to history] is both a treason and a heresy." By this he meant to say that the present living belief and living voice of the Church is supreme and infallible: for even faithful Romanists to treat it as open to historical argument is to repudiate the validity of the Church's teaching as *per se* authoritative. That was certainly a bold thing to say. If it were an *ex-cathedra* utterance of the Pope, it would be an order condemning in advance all historical investigation that might directly or by implication be likely to affect inconveniently, or perhaps even that which might touch upon, the ordinary pronouncements of the Church of Rome. Whether the Cardinal's utterance voiced the true spirit of the present-day Church of Rome, living in a secular atmosphere of historical investigation, may be left to others for judgement. The English Church, on the other hand, in the centuries since the Reformation has clearly discerned that historical and theological questions are often intimately bound up together, and especially so in her own case. She has therefore, of course not by any synodical action, but by the evident *consensus fidelium*, encouraged the study

of Church history and honoured its representatives. Nor has she been disposed in any way to guide them with bit and bridle. At the present moment several recent books by Anglican writers on early Church history lie on the table before me. The authors are none of them popularly censured for or suspected of ultramontane tendencies. But they all to a man concede the truth of the Roman historical assertion now under discussion, some warmly protesting it to be so indubitable as to be removed from the arena of further argument, and others yielding a somewhat reluctant assent, while remarking upon the scantiness of the evidence by which it is supported. Of course none of them admit the truth of the doctrinal corollary.

The best students among the adherents of the Roman Church, when writing on this subject, naturally make the most possible of the meagre historical evidence (or what they call evidence) at their command, but frankly recognise its limitations, and lay their greatest stress upon the two facts that there was no challenge in antiquity of the truth of the purely historical statement concerning the Roman preaching, bishopric, and death of St. Peter, and that there has been an unbroken belief in it by their whole Church from the earliest ages till the present day. The former of these contentions is true enough, but under the known conditions of antiquity is of not the slightest evidential value: the latter is also true, but its promotion by genuine scholars into the place of an argument might well provoke a sigh or a smile, were it not indubitable that it is precisely this age-long patient reiteration of belief and claim by the Roman Church that has had the most far-reaching psychological influence in the smothering of dissent. It is precisely this which has hypnotised even Protestant historians into an ill-advised surrender of the outer bulwarks and bastions of their own stronghold. To the ecclesiastical questions involved the classicist may

properly profess himself indifferent, but not being a susceptible subject for hypnotism, he does not consider himself estopped by the insistence of either embattled host from the consideration of the historical issue between them.

The movements and whereabouts of St. Peter are but imperfectly chronicled in the books of the New Testament, at least for the period after his miraculous escape from Herod's prison (Acts xii.). At that time he "went to another place," apparently for the sake of concealment. But the "other place" may have been in Jerusalem itself: the house of "Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark" would certainly be too well-known a gathering-place of Christians to be a safe refuge from searching-parties. But Herod died within a few months, and St. Peter was back in Jerusalem at the time of the Council which determined the requirements of Jewish observance to be demanded from Gentile converts to the Christian faith (Acts xv.). It is not clear at what time the interview took place which is mentioned by St. Paul as the occasion of the agreement that he and St. Barnabas were henceforth to preach mainly to the Gentiles, while Sts. James, Peter (here called Cephas), and John were to undertake chiefly the mission to the Jews. In his letter to the Galatians St. Paul mentions his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion (cf. Gal. i. 18 ff. with Acts ix. 23 ff.), and then goes on to say that in the course of fourteen years he went up again (πάλιν) to Jerusalem, and at this time the compact was made regarding the respective spheres of activity. That would seem to connect the time of the agreement with that of the council about the Gentile Christians. This would be, indeed, the most natural date to which to assign it, a time when St. Paul had completed his missionary journey in the southern part of Asia Minor. But

many critics have insisted that the opening sentence of the second chapter of Galatians, with its word "again," joined to the lack of any reference to a journey thither between this and that mentioned in the passage just preceding, makes it clear that St. Paul means to speak of this as his second visit to Jerusalem after his conversion. But the Acts represent him as having visited Jerusalem in the between-time to carry gifts from Antioch for famine relief (Acts xi. 29 f.). Therefore the occasion of the concordat must have been actually his third, and not his second, visit, and he misnumbered it by inadvertence. But Sir William M. Ramsay (in his *St. Paul the Traveller*) preferred to acquit St. Paul of even a momentary carelessness, and to assign the arrangement with St. Peter and the others to the visit at the time of the famine. But that occasion hardly seems to fit so well as the later, and, moreover, it does not appear necessary otherwise to suppose any actual slip of memory in St. Paul's statement. The Apostle mentions with some circumstantial details two visits of his to Jerusalem, because what took place there on these two occasions was of importance for his argument to the Galatians. A brief intermediate visit (that of the famine-relief mission) he leaves out, because it had no immediate bearing on his theme. The word "again" (*πάλιν*) is merely resumptive in the narrative in which it occurs; it does not necessarily point to a definite numerical position in a chronological series; in other words, it means "at another time," and not necessarily "for the second time." It does not exclude the possibility of non-pertinent intervening occasions left unmentioned.

The time of the rebuke of St. Peter by St. Paul at Antioch (Gal. ii. 11 ff.) was apparently later than the Jerusalem Council, and the inconsistency between St. Peter's bold stand at the former occasion and his "dissimulation" at the latter is readily explained by

his temperament, which other incidents show plainly enough was compounded of impulsive daring and equally impulsive timidity.

The Church of Antioch at a later time claimed St. Peter as its founder, but the mention of him by Origen (and by Eusebius, probably depending upon Origen) does not make it clear whether or not he was thought of by them as the first bishop of that see. Origen (*Hom. in Luc.* 1) says that Ignatius "was second bishop of Antioch after Peter"; Eusebius (*H.E.* iii. 36 [130]) says that Ignatius was "the second to inherit the episcopate at Antioch in succession to Peter." But elsewhere Eusebius (iii. 22 [112]) says more plainly that Euodius was first bishop of the Antiochenes, and Ignatius second. The equivocal expressions just quoted, which may be compared with similar expressions elsewhere, probably mean only that St. Peter organised the Church at Antioch, and appointed its first bishop. That is precisely all that the Roman Church in the second century thought of claiming about St. Peter (in union with St. Paul) with reference to herself. Yet Jerome thought St. Peter to have been bishop of Antioch (*De Vir. Ill.* 1), and so did John Chrysostom, who was himself an Antiochene (*Hom. in Inscr. Act.* 2). The same statement made its way into the *Liber Pontificalis*; and the Roman Church itself at the present time observes February the twenty-second as the day of St. Peter's Chair at Antioch, and one of the breviary lections for the day plainly says that the Apostle was first bishop at that place. Jerome's view may be based only on his interpretation of the ambiguous statements just mentioned, but is more likely ultimately due, as apparently was the declaration that St. Peter was the first bishop of Rome, to a Clementine source. The *Recognitions* plainly accord with it (*Recogn.* x. 71).

St. Paul in his first letter to the Church in Corinth (i. 12) is reproving its members for factiousness, in

that "each one of [them] saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." From this it has been supposed that, like St. Paul and Apollos, St. Peter also must have preached in Corinth, and have left there converts who revered his memory and called themselves by his name. But it is by no means necessary to regard the existence there of these Petrine Christians as a sign that St. Peter must have converted them there rather than elsewhere. Some of the Corinthian Church members called themselves "of Christ," but that is no indication that Christ may or must have preached in Corinth. The Christians "of Christ" had probably been made so by his preaching in Palestine, and had returned thence to their home in Corinth, or, being Palestinians, had later emigrated to Corinth. So the Christians "of Peter" may well have been converted by his preaching elsewhere.[1] There is certainly in this reference by St. Paul no evidence whatever that St. Peter ever saw Corinth.

For such further information as the New Testament can give us concerning the movements of St. Peter, we are thrown back upon the deductions that may be drawn from his own First Epistle. The letter was generally accepted as genuine before the time of Eusebius, and is so accepted at the present day, though Harnack vigorously dissents. Yet much divergence still exists regarding the interpretation of it. The only elements that are pertinent here are those concerned with its address and the place from which it was written. The letter is addressed "to the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." That is, it is addressed primarily to Jewish and not to Gentile Christians. This would be in scrupulous accord with the terms of St. Peter's

[1] It appears less likely that these Christians who called themselves "of Peter" had merely adopted some variety of doctrine that some one had told them was that taught by St. Peter.

especial mission to the Jews. But though the letter contains a few phrases especially applicable to persons of Jewish birth, and others that better fit those of Gentile extraction, the exhortations would in general be adapted equally well to both classes; and it is not to be supposed that there were any Churches in which Christians were not intermingled in a single brotherhood, whatever their origin. Similarly St. Paul addressed the Christians in Rome as primarily Gentiles, though there are known to have been Jews among them, and that is recognised in the letter. Origen believed St. Peter to have himself preached in the districts he mentioned in the First Epistle (*ap.* Eus. *H.E.* iii. 1 [88]). Eusebius quoted and apparently approved the statement, and, as usual, Jerome and later writers followed Eusebius. But it is altogether probable that Origen was merely drawing the inference from the address of St. Peter's letter. There is not a word in the letter itself to indicate that the writer is addressing those among whom he has himself laboured; and if that were the case, it is hard to understand how some mention of the fact should fail to be set down. Nor is there any good reason why St. Peter should not address a letter to Churches not of his founding, which were now without immediate Apostolic supervision, and were within reach of his message. So also St. John and St. Jude wrote letters *urbi et orbi*, and St. James addressed the faithful among the whole twelve tribes of the Dispersion, without distinction as to the agency of their evangelisation. The First Epistle of St. Peter certainly gives us no proper reason for supposing that the Apostle had ever visited the regions where had been established the Churches that he addresses.

The more serious and difficult question about the epistle is concerned with its provenience. As is usual with the epistles of the New Testament, the letter is not formally dated with regard to either time or place.

But in the concluding salutations the writer says, "She in Babylon, jointly-elect, saluteth you (*ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς ἡ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι συνεκλεκτή*)." The general ancient opinion was that the noun to be understood with the feminine definite article was *ἐκκλησία* or *ἀδελφή*, and the greeting was sent therefore from "the Church." The letter would appear at first blush to have been written from the most famous Babylon, that on the Euphrates.[1] There is nothing in the least suspicious about that conclusion. It is, on the contrary, perfectly plain and straightforward. With it agrees the order in which the provinces are mentioned in the address, the easternmost first. It is as if the person to whose care the letter was to be entrusted was travelling westward from Babylon by the northern trade route, and so would finally arrive by way of Pontus at the regions in the north-west of Asia Minor. But, of course, the writer at Babylon might have mentioned the provinces in the order of their nearness to him, without thought of the order in which the letter would reach them.[2] Nor is it in the slightest degree incredible that the missionary to the Jews should have travelled as far eastward from Palestine as Babylon. It was only about six hundred miles distant, and trade routes thither from the eastern Mediterranean ports were open and much frequented. Jews were notoriously a travelling and trading folk. And at Babylon and in its region there were very large settlements of Jews.[3] There is also

[1] That it could have been from the fortress of Babylon in Egypt is quite impossible, though some have so understood it: on this other Babylon see Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie*, ii. 2699, and the literature there cited.

[2] The suggestion has been made that the order in which the provinces are named is consonant with the belief that the letter was written and sent out from Rome, since the Christian who carried it (whether Silvanus or another) might be voyaging directly to Pontus, without stopping at intermediate ports, but intended to journey back westward by land to the Aegean. I know of no traces of such "Express Service to Pontus" in the shipping notices of antiquity.

[3] See on this point Jean Juster, *Les Juifs*, etc., vol. i. p. 201, and note; Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie*, ii. 2682; and the authorities there cited, especially Josephus and Philo.

no real difficulty introduced by the presence of both Silvanus (*alias* Silas) and St. Mark, who was St. Peter's "son in the Gospel," with the Apostle in Babylon after St. Paul's death. The service as amanuensis of Silvanus, who, as a Roman citizen and a sometime companion of St. Paul, had had opportunities for acquaintance with Roman affairs, would also explain satisfactorily the slight Latinisms that some critics have thought they detected in the Epistle.

But when the notion was invented and disseminated (not earlier than the latter half of the second century after Christ) that St. Peter had lived and preached in Rome, critics (following, I suspect, Hegesippus himself, who was the apparent sponsor for the legend) thought it necessary to reconcile with that acceptable story this witness from St. Peter's own pen, which apparently testified to the Apostle's residence late in life in the extreme East. This was easily done to their satisfaction, and though many dissentient voices have been raised, some of them even by Roman Catholic writers, the view which explained away the manifest difficulty appears to have established itself very thoroughly in recent days. According to it, as St. John in his Apocalypse is understood to refer to Rome under the figure of "Babylon the Great," so St. Peter, writing actually from Rome, called the capital of the empire by the mystical name of "Babylon." The first clear enunciation of this interpretation of Babylon in St. Peter's letter occurs in Eusebius (*H.E.* ii. 15 [64]), where he appears to ascribe it, along with the fact that St. Mark wrote his Gospel at Rome from the teaching of St. Peter, to Clement of Alexandria, supported generally on the Marcan question by Papias: but the word φασί, as used here by Eusebius, is somewhat ambiguous. St. Jerome, following Eusebius, does not, however, seem to attribute the interpretation to Clement and Papias, though he may have so understood the matter (*De Vir. Ill.* 8).

It is, of course, quite conceivable that early writers, while believing that St. Peter ministered at Rome, may not have troubled themselves about the Babylon question any more than they did about chronological and topographical difficulties in general. There is no reason for asserting on the basis of the language in Eusebius that Papias interpreted Babylon to be Rome.

When a simple, straightforward, and otherwise unimpeachable interpretation is discarded in favour of one that lacks these qualities, and is propounded merely because it is necessary to the support of a historical statement that cannot otherwise be clearly demonstrated, evidently the probability is that something has gone wrong in the evaluation of evidence. The interpretation of St. Peter's Epistle as dated from an actual Babylon is perfectly natural, and in itself unobjectionable. It is safe to affirm that no doubt about it would ever have been raised, unless the later story of St. Peter's Roman ministry had been created, and sadly needed the clothing of substantiation. Moreover, the attribution of a mystical meaning to the place-name Babylon in the letter appears in itself plainly unreasonable. The Apostle has not been talking in apocalyptic language anywhere else :[1] why should he interpolate here a single enigmatic word ? What possible purpose could it serve ? And how could a simple-minded Cappadocian, let us say, be expected to understand it in any other than the literal sense ? Must he have besides the letter the explanation of the messenger ? Perhaps after the Book of Revelation had been widely circulated among the Churches, the better-instructed might know that Babylon, in apocalyptic writing, could stand for Rome ; but the setting of the name in the letter of St. Peter is

[1] It is certainly unreasonable to allege that the apocalyptic meaning of Babylon is in consonance with the simple and unenigmatic metaphors in the earlier part of the letter.

not at all apocalyptic in style or suggestion, and that later Cappadocian, even though better read than his earlier brother, would have no evident prompting to the postulation of apocalypsis here. But no reasonable chronology would assign to the Book of Revelation a date that was not long after that of this epistle, and there was nothing else than the mystical language of the Revelation that could make Christians generally familiar with apocalyptic tropes, whatever might be the case with scholars. It would seem that Babylon in St. Peter's letter has certainly suffered violence at the hands of critics,—and *cui bono?* Only to the myth-maker, for the mere bolstering up of a historical speculation that certainly must be in desperate case to need such aid. *Non tali auxilio.* . . . The ancients are not to be blamed for their process of manipulation of historical evidence. They knew, and could know, no better. But the moderns cannot have invincible ignorance pleaded in their behalf with equal plausibility. Yet one may even feel some degree of aesthetic sympathy with the ancient Romanisers of Babylon. It is very unsatisfactory to have the great Prince of the Apostles fade vaguely away from our ken into the misty East, send thence a single letter (or was it two?), and then—silence. How much more comfortable to fit the Prince of the Apostles into a Chair in the mighty city that was the proper seat of dominion, and have him meet there, instead of in obscurity, the death that his Master had foretold!

There is no evidence in the books of the New Testament that St. Peter ever saw Rome; and if he ever did visit and minister in that city, it is certainly a wonder that no mention of that fact, or allusion to it, found its way into such books as Acts and Romans. Indeed the terms of St. Paul's letter to the Romans fairly preclude any possibility that he thought his brother-Apostle had ever preached in Rome, still more, that he could have been there at the time of St. Paul's writing.

The same could be said also of some of the later letters of St. Paul.

Some capital has been made by certain pro-Petrine critics out of their interpretation of St. Paul's words in Rom. xv. 20. These critics say that the Apostle intimates plainly that the Roman Church is the foundation of "another man," and they suggest that this "other man" may well have been St. Peter. But the passage in the letter is not properly susceptible of such a specific application as is thus attributed to it. St. Paul mentions the principle on which he had acted in his life of preaching; he had selected for it preferably places where the Gospel had not yet been heard, and he would not be merely building upon another man's foundation; therefore he had even not included Rome in his mission-field, simply because he thought other regions needed him more; Christianity had already gained a foothold in Rome. There is no specific allusion to "another man" as the founder of the Roman Church. St. Paul lays the emphasis rather upon the first clause of his statement, "making it my aim so to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was already named." We do not need to postulate any particular man in this particular case of Rome. Jews were constantly passing back and forth between Rome and the East, and some of these who had been converted may well have formed the nucleus of the Christian community in Rome, and have evangelised others, both Jews and Gentiles. It will be remembered how the Gospel was first preached at Antioch by unnamed Christians who took refuge there when the persecution that arose about Stephen led many Christians to flee from Jerusalem. Perhaps these first evangelists at Rome were from the number of the Jews and proselytes from that distant city who are mentioned as being among the throng of listeners and observers on that great day of Pentecost after the Lord's Ascension. Perhaps they were the Andronicus

and Junias whom St. Paul calls esteemed apostles (of course in the broader sense of the word), and describes as having been converted before he was, possibly by the teaching of Jesus himself. But all these guesses are idle.

Starting, then, from the surely not altogether insignificant silence of the New Testament (though "Babylon" and St. Paul's letter come at least near to furnishing a bit of actual evidence), it will be convenient to trace in chronological sequence the rise and progress of the story that connected St. Peter with the Church in Rome.[1]

If it were possible to credit *1 Clement* with any one of the early dates not infrequently assigned to it, that would be the first document to be discussed. But as the chronology stands in the judgement of the present writer, that place belongs to the *Letters of Ignatius*. Of the entire authenticity of even the seven letters now commonly received among us, I have already confessed to serious doubts; but as the seven *Letters* are so generally held to be genuine, they must not be passed over here.

The only remark of Ignatius that has any immediate bearing upon the question now under discussion is that in his letter to the Romans (iv. 3), where he says, "I do not give you orders, like Peter and Paul (ὡς Πέτρος καὶ Παῦλος—no verb); they were Apostles, I am a convict." In the light of the later story that these two Apostles jointly presided over the establishment of the Church of Rome, the pertinent clause has been generally understood to mean "as Peter and Paul did," and thus to bear witness to the existence of that recognised tradition in Rome and elsewhere, even in the time of Ignatius. This would carry the recognition of the belief as far back, according to usual dating,

[1] It will perhaps be not out of place here to refer the reader to what has been said on method in the first chapter of this book, and especially to the remarks on the difference of aspect between a genuine tradition and a myth (pp. 20 ff.).

as the later years of Trajan, say A.D. 108–115. But Ignatius does not plainly say, "as Peter and Paul gave you orders," though he might readily have been as explicit as this, and I should suppose would naturally have been so, if he had imagined the historical condition assumed by the later interpreters—"Peter and Paul gave you orders, not I." If we can only free ourselves from prepossessions in the premises, quite as natural an understanding would be, "as a Peter and a Paul might." But even if Ignatius meant that Peter and Paul had specifically issued orders, he would not necessarily mean that these orders were given in person, and merely to the Church in Rome. The letters of the Apostles would naturally have acquired a validity throughout all the Churches, entirely irrespective of their original addresses. That would be quite enough to account for the bishop's words. And consider, also, how he speaks to other Churches. To the Ephesians (iii. 1) he says, "I do not give you orders, as if I were some great man": to the Trallians (iii. 3), "I did not think it becoming for me, being a convict, to give you orders like an Apostle." The verb indicating command is the same in all three cases, and the modesty evidently a habit of speech as well as of thought. But if there were nothing else in the way — if there were any other reason (except by begging the question and also ignoring the silence, or worse than silence, of the New Testament) for assuming that Ignatius must have known that St. Peter as well as St. Paul had taught at Rome—there would be no reason against taking the remark to the Roman Christians as corroborative evidence of the alleged fact. But the remark is altogether too easily explicable otherwise to make it of value as primary evidence. "Like Peter and Paul" may mean no more than "as an Apostle might," precisely as the parallel phrase stands in the letter to the Trallians; and these two Apostles would naturally enough be mentioned, if the writer wished to vary

from his expression elsewhere, since they were the two most prominent Apostles, standing forth above all the rest in the books of the New Testament from Acts onward.

It might almost seem that Ignatius knew nothing about the place or manner of St. Paul's death; otherwise it would have furnished him with a natural and effective parallel to his own case, when he wrote as he did in Eph. xii. 2. Also in the letter of Ignatius to the Romans there is no intimation that he thought of Rome, whither he was travelling to his death, as the place where Sts. Peter and Paul had suffered martyrdom. Yet such an allusion would have been most natural, if he had believed the history to be so. Probably the tradition to that effect had not yet arisen.

It is also curious that Ignatius, the protagonist of the monarchical episcopate, whose letters to the more eastern Churches recognise three orders in the ministry, and inculcate submission to the bishop as the first duty of the people's obedience, and speak of, or address, a number of the bishops themselves, in his letter to the Romans addresses the Church only, says nothing about episcopate, presbyterate, or diaconate, in abstract or concrete, and might be supposed ignorant that any office of the ministry existed, or ought to exist, in Rome. This omission is certainly a very surprising thing, especially so if Ignatius knew that St. Peter had been bishop of Rome, and had established the episcopate there !

The famous epistle of the Roman Church to that at Corinth, generally called *1 Clement*, has been dated by modern critics anywhere from the year of Nero's persecution to the end of Hadrian's reign, or possibly even a bit later. In the chapter of this book on " Clement of Rome," I have indicated my own agreement with those who would date it about A.D. 140. In the fourth chapter of the letter the writer is warning his Corinthian brethren about the dreadful effects of

jealousy and envy, drawing his illustrations from Old Testament history. He cites the cases of Cain and Abel, of Jacob and Esau, of Joseph and his brothers, of Aaron, Miriam, Dathan and Abiram, of David and Saul. But in the following chapter he drops down at once from such extreme antiquity to modern times :

> " But let us leave [he writes] the ancient examples, and come to those who have striven in recent times (ἔγγιστα); let us consider the noble examples of our own generation. Through jealousy and envy the greatest and most righteous pillars have been harried and have striven unto death. Let us place before our eyes the good Apostles: Peter, who through unjust jealousy endured not one or two but more numerous labours, and having thus borne his witness (μαρτυρήσας) departed to the place of glory that was due him. Through jealousy and strife Paul pointed out the prize of patience: seven times he suffered bonds; he was driven into exile; he was stoned; serving as herald in the East and in the West, he won the noble renown of his faith. After teaching righteousness to all the world, and bearing witness (μαρτυρήσας) in the presence of governors, he was thus [viz: after these experiences] removed from the world and taken up into the holy place, being the greatest example of patience.
>
> " With these men of holy conversation have been assembled a great throng of the elect, who, suffering through jealousy many outrages and tortures, have set among us a most splendid example. Women, persecuted through jealousy as Danaes [1] and Dirces, suffering terrible and foul indignities, weak as they were in body, have pursued the steadfast course of the faith, and received a noble reward."

The letter was written in the name of the Church of Rome, as the address at the beginning shows. It is almost universally held that the passage from it above translated furnishes clear and explicit testimony to the fact that Sts. Peter and Paul had both suffered martyrdom in Rome, and within the lifetime of the writer (we may for convenience be permitted to call him Clement, as Dionysius of Corinth did).

[1] See on this text and translation p. 117, n. 2.

But let us examine the account as far as possible without that prepossession. Clement mentions St. Peter before St. Paul. That is the natural order of Apostolic precedence: it is in no other way significant. The two Apostles are dead, but their lives belong in "our own generation (*γενεά*)." This, together with the reference to persecution, led writers even of the second century to believe that, since Clement was, as they understood him, a contemporary of the event, and wrote immediately thereafter, Sts. Peter and Paul had suffered under Nero. Later men have found certain difficulties in this interpretation, and have wished to transfer both Clement and the persecution, otherwise left intact, to the time of an alleged persecution thirty years later under Domitian. Others have assigned the letter to a period later yet. Clement's use of the words "our own generation" would not justly appear to stand in the way of any of these shiftings; for though *γενεά* as an expression of time meant a "generation" at the rate of three to a century, it was also used freely of a more vague period of time. Clement is contrasting "our own generation" with times of (to him) immense antiquity. "Our own generation," then, means nothing more precise than "our own era."[1] The pronouns "we," "our," and "us" refer accordingly not to the members of the Roman Church specifically, but also to the persons addressed; and events that have occurred *ἐν ἡμῖν* are merely those *ἐπὶ τῆς ἡμετέρας γενεᾶς*. They have not necessarily happened at Rome, nor in the writer's lifetime; and no specific organised persecution (like those which, occurring within the first century, were ascribed by the early Christians to

[1] On the vagueness of such expressions for recent time in contrast to ancient, some one has noted that Cicero says *nuper, id est, paucis ante saeclis* in *De Nat. Deor.* ii. 126, and in *De Diuin.* i. 86 speaks of philosophy as a thing *quae nuper inuenta est*. Irenaeus (v. 30) says that the Revelation of St. John was *σχεδὸν ἐπὶ τῆς ἡμετέρας γενεᾶς, πρὸς τῷ τέλει τῆς Δομετιανοῦ ἀρχῆς*. To Irenaeus, accordingly, *γενεά* might mean nearly a century.

Nero and Domitian alone) appears to be postulated by Clement.

How much does Clement know about the Apostles? His multitude of Biblical quotations would in general lead one to surmise that he was at least familiar with the writings later assembled in the New Testament. He was certainly acquainted with the Epistles of St. Paul. In his characterisation of that Apostle's labours, he is of course drawing in considerable measure upon St. Paul's own words, but he appears also to have in mind the account in Acts (cf., for example, Clement's reference to exile with Acts ix. 29, 30). If he does, there is evident basis for his reference to "governors" (which may, however, mean only "magistrates"). "The limit of the West (τὸ τέρμα τῆς δύσεως)" could mean to the ancients only Spain.[1] It is highly improper to take it otherwise. Rome itself has already been included in the preceding expression, "both in the East and in the West." It is evident, I think, that Clement has only the vaguest notion of the history of the last days of St. Paul. There could have been no tradition of them, either oral or written, lingering among the members of the Church in Rome. Of course Clement could not be expected to know the chronological sequence of the Epistles of St. Paul. But he found in one of them an indication that the writer hoped soon to be set at liberty from his imprisonment at Rome (Phil. ii. 24), and he had also probably read in the last chapter of Acts that the confinement of the Apostle was far from rigorous, which might indicate that there was little danger of his condemnation. There was also nothing in the Books that interfered with the inference that St. Paul was finally set free. This accordingly was the belief of Clement. Yet there was nothing available that shed any light on the later movements of the Apostle except an indication of his earlier inten-

[1] See the article cited on p. 237, n. 2.

tion to pass from Rome to Spain (Rom. xv. 23, 28). What more natural under these circumstances than to suppose that on regaining his freedom St. Paul did carry out his previous intention, and go to Spain, and (since nothing more was related of him) meet death there, having through all his Christian life endured much and borne good witness for the truth up to the very end? These bold inferences of Clement are no bolder than those of other Christian writers of the early centuries, who were entirely conscientious in piecing out the gaps of history with interpretations helped by imagination. Of course Clement could not have written in this vague manner, if (as some have supposed) he had been actually a contemporary of the two great Apostles, and knew them to have been—perhaps had seen them—put to death at Rome. And if we assume the latest possible date for Clement's letter, it is equally impossible to believe that the Church in Rome held any such vivid tradition in his time as later interpretation has postulated and ascribed to it.

Clement is still more vague about St. Peter's life and end than about St. Paul's. That is precisely what should be expected, if he were depending merely on information deduced from the books later included in the New Testament: more is told there about St. Paul than about his colleague. It is not at all what should be expected, if Rome in Clement's time had anything like the tradition later attributed to her. It will be observed that Clement is so far from recognising the loyal duty resting upon him as an understood incumbent of the Roman see in succession to St. Peter, that he distinctly exalts St. Paul above St. Peter, not only in dwelling with detailed fullness upon his services to the faith, but in calling him "the greatest example of patient endurance," while St. Peter is merely a man of many labours (or afflictions). Clement does not make it clear that he thought the

two Apostles suffered martyrdom, in the usual later sense of the word. To my mind Clement certainly speaks as a man who had no knowledge or tradition of the manner or place in which either of the two Apostles met his death, but thought it eminently proper for them to die as martyrs, and therefore ventured to intimate rather than confidently to affirm it. In the case of St. Peter he may of course have been influenced by the prophecies concerning him in the Gospel of St. John. The word μαρτυρήσας at this period of Christian writing need mean no more than "having borne witness [for the truth]," and this by labours and sufferings in life rather than merely by death; and it is indeed this repeated and persistent endurance of hardship as good soldiers, rather than their death, that Clement emphasises as giving the Apostles their title of transfer to "the place of glory." It is only under the sway of the later and arbitrary interpretation of Clement's words in favour of a particular speculation, that we can find in them even the possibility that the Church of Rome had in that day any record or oral tradition that connected it in any way with St. Peter, or any record or tradition concerning the death of either St. Peter or St. Paul. They are mentioned only because they are the two greatest in the Apostolic college, those of whom the Writings had the most to say. Clement —and that means the Roman Church—had no more definite belief about them in their last days than he here set down. Hence his necessary vagueness of expression.

But these times of ignorance were suddenly enlightened, and a document that was ultimately drawn upon to support this new revelation is the one next in chronological order for our discussion.

But we must first retrace our steps a little. When the disciples were driven from Jerusalem by the fierce persecution that arose after the martyrdom of

Stephen, Philip, one of his colleagues in the diaconate, went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ (Acts viii. 4-24). Among the converts that he made was one Simon, a Samaritan, who had practised witchcraft among the people. In consideration of his former profession he was especially interested in the miraculous works done by Philip, and was still more impressed when the Apostles, Sts. Peter and John, came down from Jerusalem to confirm the newly baptized, and he saw the Holy Ghost given by the laying-on of their hands. Could the Holy Ghost have been communicated to Simon also? That is to be presumed, since Simon had already been baptized, and was therefore a candidate for confirmation. But the enlightenment could not have found a very complete lodgement in his soul, for he evidently soon afterward thought the thing a magical trick that it would be well worth his while to learn. He therefore offered the Apostles money, if they would teach him how to perform it. St. Peter rebuked him very sternly, and urged his repentance. The English version represents the Apostle as warning Simon that he was "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity," and this is also the meaning conveyed by the Latin Vulgate, and by some at least of the early Fathers. But it seems quite likely that the Greek words (εἰς γὰρ . . . ὁρῶ σε ὄντα) indicate rather (as the margin of the Revised Version indeed suggests) a warning about the future: if Simon does not fully repent, and give up "the thought of his heart" (that is, to continue his old career with a new repertory), he is destined to become thus-and-so. This other interpretation would be of considerable significance, if the later traditions about Simon Magus (as he is therein called) have any basis in fact—a thing which is at best doubtful. The narrator of the incident represents Simon as sufficiently impressed by St. Peter's reproof to fear possible consequences, but

perhaps of purpose does not clearly report him as sincerely penitent.

Simon thus disappears from Holy Writ; but Christian "tradition," beginning, so far as we can see, somewhat more than a century later than the event, was not content thus to let him rest. It made him the first of the great heresiarchs, the "Father of All Heresies." Into the discussion of the immense congeries of fact and fable that gathered about his name, we shall not need to go very deeply. But the starting-point of the whole thing, so far as our knowledge is concerned, is the document which is to come next before us in the chronological order for our consideration.

The Christian writer whom we know as Justin (later called, from the reputed manner of his death, Justin Martyr) was a Samaritan by birth, but became a wandering philosopher. It was apparently at Ephesus that he was converted to Christianity. Not far from A.D. 150 (earlier critics were disposed to put the date years ahead of this time) he addressed to the Roman emperor a defence of Christianity, which has been preserved. It has been mentioned in a preceding chapter of this book. The place where it was composed is not given; but the author, by statements, allusions, and the actual use of translations of Latin phrases, shows a familiarity with Rome and Roman affairs, and in that city he is reputed to have been finally martyred. It cannot reasonably be doubted that he therefore had the opportunity to see there with his own eyes (however imperfectly) the somewhat surprising thing that he mentions in the twenty-sixth chapter of his *Apology*.

In that passage he remarks that after the Ascension of Christ the devils put forward certain men who called themselves gods, and the Romans have been so far from persecuting such fakirs, that they have even shown them honour. There was one of them named Simon, a native of the village of Gittha (or Gitthae, or

Gittho) in Samaria, who through diabolic assistance performed great works of magic in the city of Rome, in the days of Claudius Caesar, and was honoured by the Romans with a statue as a god. This was set up on the river Tiber between the two bridges, and bore the inscription in Latin, SIMONI DEO SANCTO. Almost all the Samaritans, and a few also of other nationalities, worship and adore him as the first god; and a former prostitute named Helen, who then used to go about with him, they call his first "conception."

From beginning to end Justin says not one word (except for calling this Simon a Samaritan and a wonder-worker) that could even intimate that he thought the Simon of whom he speaks, and whose statue stood on the Island, was one with the Simon Magus of the episode in Acts, which he nowhere mentions. The only reason for supposing that Justin held this belief is that some later Christians did so. They apparently, in the new passion for identifications, could not believe that two men who were magicians, and were born in Samaria, could possibly both have had that very common name Simon. Their belief is of course no evidence as to Justin's mind in the matter. If he had himself thought the Simon of Samaria, who (as he supposed) had played the wizard and taught a false religion in Rome, was the Simon of Acts, it seems most likely that he would have mentioned it. Since we have, briefly put by Justin, and in fuller detail by Irenaeus and Hippolytus, the system of false doctrine taught by a Simon, and still held by men in their day, it appears necessary to suppose that there was such a heretic; that he did found a sect called after his name, Simonians; but that he had nothing to do with Simon Magus, though they were both Samaritans, since Justin did not connect them one with the other. It will be observed that Justin does not intimate that there were any Simonians in Rome in his day,

and we may safely infer not merely that there were none, but that the only ground Justin had for believing that Simon ever taught in Rome was the existence there of the century-old statue. In *c.* 56 Justin recurs again to the Roman career of Simon, and to the statue, which he asks to have removed.

Justin's account of the statue set up to Simon at Rome is circumstantial. It even has a decided local flavour, such as it ought to have if written by a man familiar with the city. For Justin says the statue was erected on (or in, ἐν) the Tiber μεταξὺ τῶν δύω γεφυρῶν; and *inter duos pontes* is the colloquial ancient designation of the Island of the Tiber. But the mystery of the statue was long ago explained. Semo Sancus was a primitive Umbrian, or Umbro-Sabellian, deity worshipped also at Rome. A number of inscriptions to the god have been found in various parts of the city, at least one (*CIL.* vi. 567, = *Dessau ILS.* 3474) on the Island itself. This is addressed SEMONI · SANCO · DEO · FIDIO; others have similar titles, some with SANCTO · DEO; and from some inscription of this character, possibly more or less worn or mutilated, Justin must have got his absurd notion that Simon was thus honoured. The definite assignment that he makes of it to the reign of Claudius may have been due to a mere guess on his part, based on the reference in Acts to the expulsion of Jews (and Christians) from Rome by that emperor. Yet the inscription may actually have contained the emperor's name in one connection or another.[1] Justin nowhere connects St. Peter with Simon or with Rome, and he does not deserve the imputation of having confused Simon the

[1] Justin's especial appeal in *c.* 56 to the *Senatus Populusque Romanus* may possibly indicate that the inscription itself specified that the statue was erected by them; and if so, the emperor's name would very probably appear in the context. Claudius was an antiquarian, fond of obscure traditions. The inscription mentioned above as actually found on the Island is cut on an altar, not on the pedestal of a statue; and this would seem to indicate that it cannot have been the one misread by Justin. But if the place were sacred to Semo Sancus, there would probably have been other memorials to him in its immediate neighbourhood.

heresiarch with Simon Magus. He clearly is not guilty on that score.

But though Justin apparently did not think Simon Magus taught in Rome, Christian writers that followed him at no long interval found (or made) reason so to believe, and to elaborate the concept yet further. We may briefly run down the list of them, and of their successive additions to the original nucleus of the story.

The extant fragments of Hegesippus contain a single brief mention of a Simon as the second in what is apparently a chronological list of chief heretics among Hebrew Christians. He is said to have founded a sect called after his name, Simonians (*ap.* Eus. *H.E.* iv. 22 [183]). This was probably the real heresiarch whom Justin had mentioned. There is nothing to indicate that Hegesippus thought him identical with Simon Magus, and, indeed, he hardly could have held that belief. For he speaks of the martyrdom of James the Just, and of his succession in the episcopate at Jerusalem by Symeon, the son of Clopas, Symeon being a cousin of the Lord himself. Up to this time, Hegesippus says, the Church (evidently at Jerusalem) was called "virgin," because it had never been corrupted by heretical doctrine. But a certain Thebuthis was the first to initiate false teaching, being prompted thereto by his failure to be made bishop. Starting from this point, Hegesippus mentions various heretical leaders, beginning the list after Thebuthis with Simon. Hegesippus, therefore, certainly supposed Simon to have come on the scene later than Thebuthis, and Thebuthis to have begun his heretical career no earlier than the accession of Symeon to the see of Jerusalem. But Hegesippus assigned the martyrdom of James the Just (whom Symeon succeeded) to a time only shortly before the siege of Jerusalem by Vespasian (*ap.* Eus. *H.E.* ii. 23 [80]). Therefore, since Hegesippus was at any rate somewhat of a student of chronology, it seems very unlikely that he would have

thought this Simon to have been the Simon Magus of Acts.

But Hegesippus says that the elevation of Symeon to the episcopate in succession to James was by unanimous nomination. It might seem, accordingly, that he meant to attribute the disappointed hopes of Thebuthis to an electoral contest held after the death of Symeon, which he places in the reign of Trajan, when the martyr was one hundred and twenty years old (*ap.* Eus. *H.E.* iii. 32 [125]). This being so, there would be added reason for supposing that Hegesippus could not think the Simon who was later than Thebuthis to be Simon Magus. But Hegesippus says the charges brought against Symeon before the proconsul Atticus were due to the enmity of certain heretics. Therefore, if Thebuthis was the first heretical teacher connected with the Church of Jerusalem, his activity in that direction had already begun, within the episcopate of Symeon instead of after it. Thebuthis had hoped to win the episcopate in succession to James. Yet if we are thus forced to assume this earlier date for the birth of heresy in the Church of Jerusalem, it was still so late that Hegesippus could hardly have identified a Simon later than Thebuthis with Simon Magus. Hegesippus, therefore, apparently did not make Simon Magus the first heresiarch, nor (so far as we can tell) did he connect St. Peter with any heretic Simon operating at Rome.

It is not certain just what the belief of Irenaeus was concerning the identity of the two Simons. There appear to be clearly two divisions in the chapter which Irenaeus devotes to Simon (i. 23 [99]). The first begins, " For Simon, a Samaritan, that Magus about whom Luke, the disciple and companion of the Apostles, says . . . "; and from this point Irenaeus goes on with the story in Acts, adding that Simon continued " to strive against the Apostles," and subjoining the tale of the statue (apparently from Justin, though with

simply a *dicitur*), but stating that the statue was actually set up by Claudius Caesar. But Irenaeus gives a brief statement about the divine pretensions of this Simon that he could not have derived from the extant text of Justin, and he omits here the tale of Helen. The second division in the account of Irenaeus begins : "However, Simon, a Samaritan [or, perhaps, "the Samaritan"], from whom all heresies have taken their rise, has the following as the substance of his false doctrine." Then follows the story of Helen, and a sketch of the Simonian system in considerable detail. This latter could not have come from the extant work of Justin.[1] In the first division Simon (Magus) is *Samarites*; in the second, the Simon is *Samaritanus*. This is probably not significant. But if Irenaeus meant that this "father of heresies" is the Simon Magus just mentioned, he could readily have said so: if, on the other hand, he meant that the great heresiarch was another Simon than Magus, he could readily have said that. Perhaps he did, and the ancient Latin version, which alone we have to depend on here, is at fault—though the version is in general even painfully literal: it stands out in marked contrast in this respect with the versions made by Rufinus. But taking the text as it stands, the impression given by it is that Irenaeus was not sure whether he was dealing with one Simon or two, and preferred to leave the matter in an ambiguous condition. He does not represent Magus as "contending against the Apostles" in Rome. He does not say where the conflict took place. But he assigns it to a time after St. Peter's rebuke, so that it is clear that in Irenaeus we have the first extant writer to represent Simon of the Acts as

[1] But Justin told the emperor (*Apol.* 26) that he had composed and finished a work against the heresies that had sprung up, and this book he would be glad to give the emperor, if he cared to have it. It is probable that the emperor indicated no passionate desire to investigate such matters. If Justin later published the book (about which we know nothing), it might have served as a source for Irenaeus, and perhaps for writers after him.

having lapsed completely and finally from the fellowship of the Apostles. Irenaeus is also the first to suggest by his treatment the identification of Simon, the great heresiarch, with Simon Magus.

Simon Magus was several times a target for Tertullian's fiery rhetoric. The orator represents Simon as having consoled himself by the purchase of Helen after he had been solemnly excommunicated by the Apostles; he then taught the heretical doctrine still held by Simonians, and was honoured in Rome by a statue inscribed SANCTO DEO. In Tertullian's *De Anima* (34) is an account of the Simonian doctrine in practically the terms of Irenaeus in the second division of his chapter. Tertullian, then, plainly identifies the two Simons, and is the first extant writer to do this; but he does not mention any conflict of St. Peter with Simon at Rome.

Clement of Alexandria barely mentions the heresy-teacher, Simon, and his followers, the Simonians, and says nothing to indicate any opinion about the history or identity of the founder of the sect.

Hippolytus, whom Bishop Lightfoot[1] would identify with Gaius (less correctly, Caius), the Roman presbyter, carries us farther with a bound. In his *Refutation of all Heresies* he devotes much attention to Simon. Of course the only Simon to him is Simon Magus. That identification, once made, was certain to be continued. It suited the minds of men who were not troubled by critical doubts, and who apparently interpreted even Justin in accordance with their own ideas of innate fitness. Irenaeus and Tertullian, as will be remarked later, believed St. Peter to have laboured at Rome, but were not tempted, even by the story of the statue, to bring St. Peter and his old enemy face to face in the capital, as they had been placed in the East. The

[1] In his *S. Clement of Rome*, ii. 377 ff. The author also believed the *Refutation* to have been an early instead of a late work of Hippolytus, and to have antedated the books of Tertullian. But Bishop Lightfoot did not live to complete his argument on this point.

dramatic Hippolytus (he shows his taste for lively narrative elsewhere) was quick to seize this previously neglected opportunity (*Ref.* vi. 15). Simon Magus did come to Rome and contend there often with the Apostles, especially with St. Peter. (Here a part of the narrative is unfortunately missing.) The story concludes with telling how the heretic was in danger of conviction of fraud, and staved off the evil moment by professing his ability to rise again from the grave the third day after being buried alive.[1] Under his direction his disciples dug a grave and buried him therein—but he never rose again! This dénouement is more orthodox than aesthetically gratifying.

Of the detailed account by Hippolytus of Simon's philosophy we need not speak. It agrees in substance with that by Irenaeus, and in such a manner as to suggest to experts a common source. But one could not reasonably believe the picturesque historical details to have been invented as early as the time of Irenaeus. They smack too decidedly of the later day, when the pseudo-Clementines were deploying their forces, and teaching men to give history a thicker sugar-coating of imagination, especially in matters pertaining to Simon and St. Peter.

In the form given the Simon-myth by Hippolytus we have it practically full-blown; for not only are all its essential features assembled, but they begin to be decorated with wonder-stories. With this beginning of the painting-up process we may stop our examination. The florid expansion of the legend may be studied in the pseudo-Clementines and allied literature.[2] All the main details of the fable were accepted from the beginning of the third century. A simple and

[1] This suggests some possible knowledge among magicians at that day of the trick of suspension of vital processes alleged to be practised (but for longer periods and with better success) in India at the present time.

[2] À propos of one of these stories, a crotchety old praiser of the past growls that it is at least a comfort in these times to be assured on quasi-canonical authority that the first airship was contrived by devils, operated by one of their imps, and wrecked by divine interposition.

dignified putting of them may be read in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius. The poetic embellishments must be looked for elsewhere. Those to whom such things are not yet stale and outworn will find more surprising ideas than those of the *Clementines* and the apocryphal Acts themselves in the elucidations of them by Baur and his followers, who detected in them (and apparently justly) an Ebionite attempt to forward their own doctrines, including the making out of Simon Magus a portrait of St. Paul himself, as the great enemy of St. Peter.

It should be remembered that Eusebius (*H.E.* ii. 14 [63]) appears to think that St. Peter was divinely inspired to go to Rome that he might confront Simon Magus there, as he had before done in Palestine. The date of the Apostle's arrival in Rome Eusebius (who mentions the statue of Simon) assigns to the reign of Claudius. Evidently this, whatever its primary source, is in Eusebius an inference based on Justin, and nothing more. But on this dating by Eusebius was founded the later belief that St. Peter's episcopate in Rome began under Claudius. It was supposed to have lasted twenty-five years. The chronological difficulties in the matter need not be dwelt upon here. Of course Eusebius was no better authority for the date of St. Peter's advent in Rome than he was for the fact.

The gradual development of the myth is to be noted. There are no signs of it till the middle of the second century. Then the innocent mention by Justin of a Samaritan heresiarch, together with an interesting misreading and misinterpretation of an inscription under a statue at Rome, starts the avalanche. Hegesippus is silent. But Irenaeus seems to suggest the welding of Justin's story to that of Acts, and helps a little toward it. Tertullian cheerfully and clamorously carries out the smithy-work. And finally the Roman Hippolytus transfers the scene to Rome

(perhaps following therein a Clementine romancer), and ties the myth up with the already invented fable of St. Peter's residence there. And the whole thing is believed and repeated, sometimes with much embellishment, by every one thereafter. It becomes "a universally held tradition from antiquity," and is used in that alleged aspect to contribute verisimilitude to the equally artificial Petrine myth. Because we can see it shaping itself, and because it is so used, it has seemed worth while to spend these minutes upon it. We may now turn back to the main line of our review, and take up the writer of importance who came next after Justin.

Hegesippus was a Palestinian Jew who had been converted to Christianity (Eus. *H.E.* iv. 22 [184]). His five books of *Commentaries* (or *Memoirs*) were used by Eusebius, who has preserved for us a number of valuable excerpts from them. In *H.E.* iv. 8 [150], Eusebius appears to have misinterpreted a reference to Hadrian by Hegesippus as indicating that he flourished in Hadrian's time. He is also mentioned by Eusebius, both here and in iv. 11 [157], in the same breath with, but before, Justin; and Jerome accordingly definitely puts Justin after him (*De Vir. Ill.* 23). But, farther on, Eusebius clearly assigns Hegesippus to the reign of Antoninus Pius (iv. 21, 22 [181]). His *floruit* may be reasonably placed as about A.D. 150–180. Jerome says that Hegesippus set down in his *Commentaries* a full chronicle of ecclesiastical events from the Crucifixion to his own times. But Jerome may be reasonably suspected of elaborating the statement, after his not infrequent manner, entirely from the remark of Eusebius (*H.E.* iv. 8 [150]) that Hegesippus put together in simple style in his five books the plain tradition of the Apostolic doctrine. There is nothing in Jerome's writing to show that he had any knowledge of Hegesippus and his work other than what he found in Eusebius. And

there is nothing in the extant fragments of Hegesippus (all but one of them from Eusebius), or in references to him, to indicate that his *Commentaries* were anything like an ecclesiastical history. He was primarily interested (as might be expected at his time) in the confutation of heresies, and he investigated and recorded only a certain very limited class of historical events, and these only because he conceived them to have a very direct and practical bearing on his main theme. He was, indeed, the first of Christian writers after the Apostolic age to attempt to support theology by the appeal to history. So far forth he certainly deserves great credit, though it is perhaps not fair to rob Eusebius of his title as "the Father of Church History" in order to confer it upon Hegesippus. Hegesippus conceived the idea that orthodoxy could be defined as the doctrine universally and continuously held among all the Churches. He thus anticipated in some degree the Vincentian Rule. Perhaps he was partly inspired by Ignatius. Therefore, to determine what the Churches actually did hold, he was moved to make a long journey from his native Palestine as far as Rome, visiting the Churches all along the way, and questioning them straitly about the Faith as they held and taught it. He reports that "in each succession and in each city the doctrine is as the Law and the Prophets and the Lord proclaim it" (*ap.* Eus. *H.E.* iv. 22 [182]).

Hegesippus mentions the "succession," meaning by this the succession of bishops in each place. For holding, as we must suppose he did, the fully developed Eastern ideal of the episcopate, he believed the bishops were directly descended from the Apostles. Since the true doctrine was the Apostolic doctrine, and the bishops were the lineal successors of the Apostles, they must be the trustworthy guardians of the Christian deposit. Therefore the authority of the doctrine as taught in any Church was assured, if it could be

certified by a list of the Church's bishops in due order of succession from the Apostles themselves. Hence Hegesippus was especially careful to inquire from each Church that he visited about the list of its past bishops. He apparently found no difficulty in acquiring his desired information, until he arrived at Rome. He does not say that he found any difficulty there, but his language suggests that the members of the Roman Church were unable to show him at once a list of their bishops, because they had no such thing at command that covered the earlier days. After speaking of his visit to the Church of Corinth, which he found had remained fast in the true doctrine from the beginning down to the present time, that of Primus, then bishop in that city, Hegesippus writes:

"Finding myself in Rome, I compiled a list of the bishops as far as Anicetus, whose deacon was Eleutherus. Anicetus was succeeded by Soter, and after him came Eleutherus." [1]

It would appear from this that Anicetus was the bishop in Rome when Hegesippus arrived there. The addition to the list of Soter and Eleutherus may indicate that Hegesippus remained in Rome till into the latter's reign;[2] but the manner in which he speaks in the very next sentence (quoted above) of the total result of his survey of the Churches, might rather indicate that before very long he returned to the East, and there

[1] *Ap.* Eus. *H.E.* iv. 22 (182) *γενόμενος δὲ ἐν Ῥώμῃ, διαδοχὴν ἐποιησάμην μέχρις Ἀνικήτου, οὗ διάκονος ἦν Ἐλεύθερος. καὶ παρὰ Ἀνικήτου διαδέχεται Σωτὴρ μεθ' ὃν Ἐλεύθερος.* This is certainly the correct text and translation. But Rufinus arbitrarily shaped his translation (*cum autem uenissem Romam, permansi inibi donec Aniceto Soter et Soteri successit Eleutherus*) after the interpretation of Eusebius rather than after the actual text of Hegesippus. *Διατριβήν* for *διαδοχήν* is a modern emendation in the text as given by Eusebius, to fit the version of Rufinus. The strongest modern opponent of this view, one who would read *διατριβάς* for *διαδοχήν*, is Harnack (*Gesch. d. altchr. Litt.* ii. 1, pp. 180 ff.).

[2] So Eusebius actually understood the matter, for in *H.E.* iv. 11 (157) he writes, *καθ' ὃν* [*Ἀνίκητον*] *Ἡγήσιππος ἱστορεῖ ἑαυτὸν ἐπιδημῆσαι τῇ Ῥώμῃ, παραμεῖναί τε αὐτόθι μέχρι τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς Ἐλευθέρου,* and Jerome followed him (*De Vir. Ill.* 22), as of course did also Rufinus. But it is quite unnecessary to suppose that the text of Hegesippus that Eusebius had before him differed in any respect from that quoted above, which reads *διαδοχήν*. Eusebius merely drew an inference from that concerning the length of residence of Hegesippus in Rome, which was unwarranted.

completed and published his *Commentaries*; and that the mention of the immediate successors of Anicetus, Soter and Eleutherus, was interpolated by him, or by some one else (perhaps only following Irenaeus), in after years into a copy of his work from which that used by Eusebius was derived. This surmise may find support in the fact that Epiphanius, who has clearly been copying from Hegesippus, yet carries the list of the Roman succession no further than Anicetus. Epiphanius apparently had before him a copy of the first edition of the *Commentaries* of Hegesippus, and not of the second, in which Soter and Eleutherus had been added to the list. If Hegesippus did not mention the later successors of Primus at Corinth, it was because he did not know who they were, or thought only the Church of Rome so important as to need the additional note.

Eusebius quoted the passage from Hegesippus because of its testimony to the continuity everywhere of the Apostolic doctrine. It is of especial interest to us for another reason. Hegesippus says that at Rome he compiled a list of the bishops of that city. He does not say that the Roman Church furnished him with its list. The fair implication is that they had no list to furnish, and Hegesippus made one up for them. This corresponds precisely to what the documents that have been previously examined would lead us to expect—if we approach the subject without the prepossessions that are due to later statements, and by the reiterations of the Roman Church have now become wellnigh universal. It was the list of the Roman episcopate as compiled by the interested visitor from the East that formed ultimately the "historical" foundation for the later pretensions of the Roman see. Hegesippus was from the East, where the monarchical episcopate probably came into being soon after the death of the Apostles. He could not readily conceive that any Church, even so far away

as Rome, could possibly have had any other system than that which he supposed to be primitive, and which had prevailed in the Churches with which he had been previously acquainted. Especially would he find any other history difficult to imagine, when once he had convinced himself that continuity of the episcopate and continuity of orthodox doctrine were essentially connected one with the other. The Roman Church was found by him to hold and teach the Apostolic doctrine; it had also at the present time a bishop like any other Church (we, of course, cannot determine just what his functions were in full detail, or whether they differed in kind or degree from those of the episcopate elsewhere); it must, therefore, have had bishops ever since its foundation, or at least since the death of the Apostle who in the earliest days had directed its infant steps. If the Roman Christians had no list of their bishops from the beginning, that was merely a defect of record and tradition which it was not too late to mend. Hegesippus would compile it for them, and thus bring them into line with their sister Churches in the East. That in the entire lack of documentary evidence, and of any oral tradition stretching far back beyond the memories of living men, he would have recourse to the interpretation of such Books as were generally accepted is of course inevitable. That he interpreted the Books with the help of a lively imagination is both certain and natural. Every Christian writer of those early centuries did precisely that same thing, and no one need now be shocked by it—unless possibly some expositor of the Puritan school, who believes not merely in the verbal inspiration of Holy Scripture, but also in the plenary inspiration of his own favourite interpretations of Scripture, and perhaps also of all the other early Church writings that contain or intimate historical statements.

But how did the list run that Hegesippus compiled for his own use and that of his brethren? It has not

been preserved to our time, but it may be securely restored from the list given by Irenaeus.

In consideration of the important position held by Irenaeus among the early Church Fathers, it is somewhat remarkable that we know so little about his life. This little we get chiefly from Eusebius, who derived most of his scanty information from the works of Irenaeus himself. Irenaeus wrote and spoke Greek. He was a Christian from youth, if not from childhood, and his early residence was in or near Smyrna ; for he tells us (*ap.* Eus. *H.E.* v. 20 [238]) that as a young man he was an eager and devoted disciple of Polycarp. Irenaeus was accordingly born somewhere about A.D. 140, perhaps rather before than after that date. Gregory of Tours (538–595) says that he was martyred under Septimius Seuerus, but no earlier writer mentions his death. He appears first in history as a presbyter of the Church in Lyons, sent thence on a mission to Eleutherus, bishop of Rome (Eus. *H.E.* v. 4 [214]). This must have been about A.D. 178, if the persecution of the Churches in Lyons and Vienne is correctly assigned to the year A.D. 177. To the martyred Pothinus, bishop of Lyons, Irenaeus himself afterward succeeded (Eus. *H.E.* v. 5 [216]).

Irenaeus apparently profited by his visit to Rome. He thoroughly imbibed the spirit and teaching of the Church in the capital of the empire. It was to him (Iren. *Her.* iii. 3. 2) the Church to which, on account of its pre-eminent position (he perhaps has in mind not entirely its situation in the capital, but also its founding by the two great Apostles, on which he lays stress elsewhere), "every Church (that is, the faithful of every quarter) must turn," since here has surely been preserved the Apostolic doctrine in its purity.[1]

[1] On this much-disputed passage see conveniently F. W. Puller, *The Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*[3], pp. 19 ff., and the literature there referred to. If this passage in Irenaeus should be translated to the entire taste of Roman controversialists, it would still have the weight at best of the mere opinion of only one grateful provincial visitor, who had been impressed by what he had seen and heard in Rome; and

If Hegesippus did actually remain in Rome till into the episcopate of Eleutherus, he may have been there when Irenaeus arrived. But if he had departed for the East before that time, he had evidently left the result of his teaching behind him. The Roman Church had gladly accepted the list of its hierarchy that Hegesippus had compiled for it, and was proud to exhibit it to new-comers like Irenaeus. With the list the Church had apparently also accepted from the compiler his reasons why such a knowledge of the succession was of great importance for the confutation of heretics. With both list and reasons, as taught them by Hegesippus, the Roman Church equipped the receptive mind of Irenaeus: for in his great treatise against heresies (*Contra Haereses libri quinque* the Latin version calls it for brevity) he lays down in precisely the substance of Hegesippus the argument from the episcopal succession, and then proceeds to give the list of the Roman bishops from the Apostles, Sts. Peter and Paul, who "founded and built" the Church, down to Eleutherus, who, as Eusebius says (*H.E.* v. 5 *fin.*), was bishop at the time when Irenaeus was writing his treatise. We may therefore borrow the list from Irenaeus, and turn back with it to Hegesippus again.[1]

Hegesippus had apparently been teaching as well as learning even on his way to Rome. Some result

even to him the necessity of "agreement with" the Roman Church (if we could possibly so understand the awkward ancient Latin version that alone represents for us the now lost but probably equally awkward Greek original of this passage) rests altogether on his conviction that thus far, because of the good fortune of its founding and history, it had doubtless learned truly and kept securely the orthodox faith. But even the enthusiastic Irenaeus could not certify to the perpetual infallibility of that Church or of its bishop, even as a witness to the truth; and he does not regard the Roman Church as the sole essential witness to, still less as the sole arbiter of, the faith, for he goes on to cite also in that same aspect the chief Churches of his native region, Smyrna and Ephesus.

[1] The list runs (Iren. *Her.* iii. 3. 3; cf. Eus. *H.E.* v. 6 [217]): 1. Linus, 2. Änencletus, 3. Clemens, 4. Euaristus, 5. Alexander, 6. Xystus, 7. Telesphorus, 8. Hyginus, 9. Pius, 10. Anicetus, 11. Soter, 12. Eleutherus. Irenaeus does not attempt to specify dates in connection with the names. Whether Hegesippus did so or not is a disputed question. On general considerations I should think it unlikely that he cared to go so far as this.

of his visit to the Church of Corinth is apparent not very long after that occasion. The Church of Corinth showed its interested visitor from the East a noteworthy letter that had been sent it at some earlier time by the Church of Rome. This was indubitably the document we know as 1 *Clement.* Eusebius (*H.E.* iii. 16; iv. 22) merely reports the mention of the letter by Hegesippus, but does not quote his actual words. It is unsafe to infer from the ascription of the letter by Eusebius to Clement that he must have found this attribution in the *Commentaries* of Hegesippus, though he probably did so. But Dionysius, bishop of Corinth not very long after the visit there of Hegesippus, in writing to the Church of Rome (perhaps about A.D. 170) definitely mentions the letter as read for instruction in the public services of his Church, and names Clement as its scribe (*ap.* Eus. *H.E.* iv. 23 [187]). It is not a rash guess that the Corinthians owed this suggestion of authorship to Hegesippus. He, of course, would get it by mere inference from the reference in the *Shepherd* of Hermas (*Vis.* ii. 4. 3) to Clement as the foreign secretary of the Roman Church. But a second reference of this same Dionysius is of more importance for our immediate purpose. In writing to the Church of Rome he reminds them that both their Church and his own owed their planting to the Apostles Peter and Paul, both of whom taught in Corinth and founded the Church there, and later proceeded to Italy and taught, and were martyred there at the same time (*ap.* Eus. *H.E.* ii. 25 *fin.*). This is the earliest circumstantial statement extant that St. Peter preached in Corinth and later in Rome, and was put to death there together with St. Paul. Dionysius probably owed much of this also to the conjectural restoration of history which Hegesippus was practising. For the belief that St. Peter had actually laboured in Corinth, Hegesippus doubtless rested on his faulty interpretation of the words of St. Paul in his letter to

the Corinthians, which have already been mentioned. The Corinthian Church may have so interpreted St. Paul's letter even before the visit of Hegesippus. But it is, for reasons laid down elsewhere, quite without proper basis to infer that the Corinthian Church had preserved from the time concerned any actual tradition of St. Peter's preaching in their city. At most they would have had only a traditional interpretation of St. Paul's words, and this would date back for its origin only to a time long after the letter had been received, when all knowledge of the circumstances of it had vanished. If, when we are plunged in the morass of second-century conjectural restorations of first-century Church history, we are to rescue ourselves by postulating (whenever it happens to suit our book) the existence of oral tradition or of Church "archives," we are simply in our desperation disregarding such rational canons of criticism as no writer of any authority whatever on other subjects than Church history would dream of rejecting.

But even if the Church of Corinth had adopted a traditional interpretation that led them to believe in St. Peter as one of their founders, it is very unlikely that they had any "traditions" concerning his later career. It is much more likely that they owed such conjectures to Hegesippus than that he adopted them from the Corinthians or from any one else. St. Peter had gone to Rome, laboured there like (if not with) St. Paul in establishing the Church, and died there as a martyr with his illustrious colleague. There is no previous declaration in extant literature of such events, but rather, a notable silence, where explicit reference might have been expected, if the facts were as claimed. On what could Hegesippus have based his conclusions of this sort? First and foremost, we may safely guess, on the interpretation of "Babylon" in St. Peter's First Epistle as meaning Rome. That apocalyptic interpretation would have been unnatural

(to my thinking, impossible) at the time the letter was written: a century later, when the Church was familiar with the Book of Revelation, it was most natural, especially when the investigator was eager to piece together such scattered intimations of history as he could find, and had ascertained from Acts and Romans that the Roman Church was already in existence long before St. Paul came to the city, and furthermore had convinced himself that St. Peter had preached as far to the West as Corinth, which was on the most frequented route between the East and Rome. I suspect that Hegesippus thought St. Peter's preaching in Corinth preceded that of St. Paul, and that the Apostle of the Circumcision thence proceeded to Rome and founded the Church there, before Claudius expelled the Jews from the city. Thus the mystery of the early beginnings of the Church in Rome would be satisfactorily cleared away, according to the investigator's mind, and the story agreeably linked up with that of Aquila and Priscilla, and thus also with St. Paul's letter to the Romans. The difficulties that we discover are altogether too refined to have appealed to a Hegesippus, or to any other Christian writer of that early date. Of course he would think it certain that the Church in the great capital of the Empire must have had an Apostolic founder, and thus fall no whit behind the Churches in far less important cities.

And if Babylon means Rome, then the utterances of 1 *Clement* and of Ignatius (for in this chronological order Hegesippus would indubitably place them) at once fall into line, and furnish sure evidence that St. Peter as well as St. Paul preached at Rome, and both Apostles suffered martyrdom there at substantially the same time. The earlier enigmas were thus happily solved, and the Roman Church gladly adopted the history thus made up for it; whereas up to this time it is very evident that there had been no tradition or record afloat that cast any light upon the beginnings

of the Church in Rome except what was set down in Acts and Romans, and none at all that connected St. Peter with Rome.

It is quite manifest from the statements in Irenaeus that Hegesippus (and Irenaeus, and therefore the Church in Rome at this time) had no thought of St. Peter any more than of St. Paul as actually the first bishop of Rome. They are supposed to be the founders of the Church and the appointers of its first bishop. That was precisely the state of things that generally attended the foundation of Apostolic Churches elsewhere.[1] The Apostles certainly exercised over the Churches a very high degree of authority. This power of ruling, along with that of ordaining and of instruction, was later inherited, according to accepted belief, by the bishops of the respective Churches. But the bishops of Apostolic times were officers appointed by the Apostles, and distinctly subordinate to them. Apostles exercised, to be sure, what was later called episcopal authority, and *episcopi* (or *presbyteri*, at first as a college in the local Church) exercised in the absence of the Apostles delegated Apostolic authority; but the absurd notion that one of the Twelve might actually have appointed himself to the lower office, and become properly and technically the bishop of a local Church, had evidently not been conceived in the times of Hegesippus and Irenaeus.[2] And throughout all con-

[1] But on the belief, doubtless of no early origin, that St. Peter was actually the first bishop of the Church of Antioch, see p. 277.

[2] In *Haer.* iii. 4. 3 the Latin version calls Hyginus the eighth bishop of Rome, though Eusebius (*H.E.* iv. 11), who alone preserves the Greek text here, makes Irenaeus call Hyginus the ninth. But the Latin version only a step farther on calls Anicetus the tenth bishop, and is thus consistent with itself, and with the original numbering as given in Iren. *Haer.* iii. 3. 3. The text in Eusebius had doubtless had "eighth" emended to "ninth," possibly to fit in with the fable unknown to Hegesippus and Irenaeus, that St. Peter was himself the first bishop. The same explanation applies to Iren. *Haer.* i. 27. 1, where the Greek text, preserved only in Eusebius (*loc. cit.*), calls Hyginus again the ninth bishop, but the Latin version (in the best tradition), the eighth. The two passages in Eusebius are close together, and this fact would suggest that some one having the list of the bishops indeed in mind, but from Irenaeus only the two adjacent excerpts in Eusebius before his eyes, had changed "eighth" to "ninth" in the manuscript of Eusebius (possibly only because the corrector was used to counting, after the Roman method, both end-terms in an ordinal

sideration of the list of early Roman bishops, we should not forget the primary argument against any possible authenticity of any such catalogue, that up to a time probably well into the second century (cf. specifically the negative evidence from Ignatius, Clement, and Hermas) there could not have been in Rome any such pre-eminence of a single cleric above his presbyterial brethren as the title of bishop implies in the only sense in which Hegesippus would understand it. The ability of Hegesippus to compile such a list where none had existed before is no proof at all that diocesan bishops had functioned in Rome from Apostolic times; it is merely an indication that Hegesippus had no better an understanding of earlier Church history, or of the critical functions properly appertaining to a historian, than had other zealous Christians of his day.

To Hegesippus, then, and to Hegesippus only, is due the inception of the fable that made St. Peter a founder of the Church in Rome. Once introduced, the story won acceptance on all sides. There was no evident reason to doubt it. It had to displace no other tale. It neatly harmonised and united several otherwise disconnected if not conflicting statements. It assigned to the Church in the imperial capital a dignity of origin consonant with its political and social importance. It offended the sensibilities of no one, in Rome or elsewhere; for it was not for a very long time that it was made the basis of any claim for the Roman Church of a pre-eminence of authority over other Churches. Writers of the Roman obedience at the present time are wont to lay great stress upon

series), and from his text all our manuscripts of Eusebius are derived. But against this is the stubborn fact that Cyprian (*Ep.* 74) also called Hyginus the ninth bishop; so that either Cyprian made independently the same error as the corrector of Eusebius, or it had been introduced into the text of Irenaeus himself before Cyprian's time, and had even contaminated some of the manuscripts of the Latin version. The later copied instance in Epiphanius may be disregarded. It is probably due to mere chance that only Hyginus, and he only in these places, has suffered from this numerical emendation.

the fact of the universal acceptance of the belief in ancient times. Why should it not have been accepted then? There was nothing to be alleged against it, and in the not at all strange lack of historical traditions or records of local Church events in the early days, it was only one of fifty conjectural restorations that the Church in general had not the slightest objection to welcome and adopt on the authority of practically any writer. I suppose there never was an age when the mere written word had more and swifter influence in the Christian communities in historical matters, where no test could be applied or thought of, but where, so far as it touched upon faith and order, there could be no suspicion of its orthodox tendencies. Even the work of the Clementine romancers, heterodox in intent and purpose though some at least of it may now seem to us, was widely accepted among orthodox Christians, and the " historical " inventions in it left their trace in Catholic writings from the late second century onward, and apparently have their hold still on writers of the present day, even on some who are not in the communion of the Roman Church. On this very point of the life of St. Peter in Rome, I find a recent Anglican writer asserting warmly that it is not a tradition but a fact vouched for by competent historical evidence; and among other witnesses he goes on to cite Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Hegesippus, Dionysius, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Origen, Eusebius, Jerome, and declares that the earlier of these writers must have been well acquainted with the traditions and archives of the Church in Rome. " Traditions and archives " again, and these exercising so little influence on the fortunate writers! But it is truly an imposing list of great names; yet what is the evidential value of it, when we find no plain indication of the " fact " in either Clement or Ignatius, and from Hegesippus onward we are able clearly to discern each man copying from his predecessor, and often adding a

bit of detail of his own to the story as he received it? It is at most seldom that modern writers of repute on other subjects than Church history deal with authorities in this antiquated manner. It was innocent and pardonable once; it is certainly reprehensible now. Statements that are affirmed on the basis of such postulates as these mythical oral traditions and written archives, which no ancient writer cites or intimates as in existence from the times concerned, might better be called not historical facts but historical artifacts.

Hegesippus, then, settled once for all throughout antiquity the belief that St. Peter preached in Rome, and shared with St. Paul in the final organisation of the Church there. The Church of Rome gratefully adopted his doctrine on this point. Dionysius and Irenaeus echoed it. But when we pass on to Tertullian, who, of course, accepted as a fact the residence and death of St. Peter in Rome, we find an addition to the story. Tertullian says plainly (*Praescr. Her.* 36; *Scorp.* 15) that Sts. Peter and Paul suffered death in Rome under Nero, the former by crucifixion, the latter by the sword. Here we have for the first time the general period and the specific manner of the death of the two Apostles affirmed. One might think that Tertullian was reclining here upon the belief in his own time extant in the Church of Rome. But in consideration of the way in which he treats historical items elsewhere, and in particular of his appeal here to the Lives of the Caesars (other references make it certain that he means the work of Suetonius), as witness that Nero was the first persecutor of the Church, I am inclined to think that at least in considerable measure he is constructing inferences. The two Apostles had already been understood to have suffered death in Rome at about the same time, and, as the natural, though unwarranted, interpretation of Clement indicated, in the course of a formidable persecution. His reading of Suetonius led Tertullian to assign the

event confidently to the reign of Nero. As to the precise manner of death, Tertullian was a Roman lawyer; he knew that St. Peter, as an alien, would naturally be crucified; he perhaps also had in mind an interpretation of the prophecies concerning St. Peter in St. John's Gospel (xiii. 36 ; xxi. 18 ff.); St. Paul, as a Roman citizen, would naturally be beheaded. If Tertullian had only read not merely the brief mention in Suetonius, but also the vivid description of the Christian sufferers at Rome under Nero as given in the *Annals* of Tacitus, I imagine our " tradition " of the mode of St. Peter's death would not have referred to simple crucifixion. Tertullian's account, as might be expected, was universally received. It became " a unanimous and uncontested ancient tradition."

Origen, some half a century later, of course accepts everything that has gone before, but adds another picturesque detail concerning the crucifixion of St. Peter (*ap.* Eus. *H.E.* iii. 1 [88]): his cross was, at his own request, planted head downward. Jerome (*De Vir. Ill.* 1) takes the statement from Eusebius, and adds the interpretation (possibly from the same source as that followed by Origen) that the Apostle said he was not worthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Lord. Whence Origen derived his detail, whether from his own imagination or from some other report, is unknown. The latter alternative seems more probable, since Origen must have been acquainted with much apocryphal literature of the cycle of Petrine myths. Even such a manner of crucifixion appears not to be mentioned by pagan writers.[1] But Eusebius (*H.E.* viii. 8 [385]) speaks of Egyptian martyrs (date not specified) as suffering thus, though from his state-

[1] The passage in Seneca (*Cons. ad Marc.* 20. 3), not infrequently cited as evidence that criminals were on occasion crucified head downward, is not properly susceptible of such interpretation. Seneca, like other writers, uses *cruces* as the generic term for punishments akin to crucifixion. The three varieties which he mentions in this sentence are, hanging by the feet (*capite conuersos in terram suspendere*), impalement (*alii per obscoena stipitem egerunt*), and crucifixion proper (*alii bracchia patibulo explicuerunt*).

ment that they, apparently in contrast to those mentioned by him as crucified in the ordinary manner, died from ultimate starvation, it is possible that they were hung up by the feet and left to die, in place of being actually nailed to a cross. Also a late tract on the work and death of the Twelve Apostles falsely ascribed to Hippolytus mentions not merely St. Peter but also Sts. Philip and Bartholomew as suffering in this manner. But in the matter of St. Peter the later writer was clearly copying Origen. Of course, the account in Origen speedily won universal credence, and became "a unanimous ancient tradition."

But, meanwhile, another witness to the reality of St. Peter's residence and death in Rome appeared in the person of Gaius (or Caius), a "Roman presbyter," who is quoted by Eusebius (*H.E.* ii. 25 [84]). Bishop Lightfoot would identify him with Hippolytus, later called bishop of Porto. But whether Gaius or, more truly, Hippolytus, modern Roman controversialists are wont to appeal to him triumphantly as giving sure testimony (somewhere about A.D. 210 or later) in support of what they call the fact that both St. Peter and St. Paul were martyred in Rome, and fortifying it by ocular evidence. Gaius was engaged in the popular occupation of arguing against a heretic. In one of the most delightful of Mr. Belloc's tales, the Devil cites on his side in a certain contention "all the historians, and all the scientists, all the universities, all the . . .," and St. Charles Borromeo calmly counters by citing against them all—the Pope. Similarly Gaius dealt with his poor heretic, who had apparently put forward in support of his doctrine (quite after the manner of Hegesippus) the fact that the graves of Philip and his four daughters could even then be seen in Hierapolis in Asia. Gaius replies by hospitably inviting his opponent to come from the East to Rome and be convinced. "I can show," he writes, "the trophies [*τρόπαια* in the Greek of Eusebius] of the

Apostles. If you will go to the Vatican, or to the Ostian road, you will find the trophies of those who founded this Church." It is not certain what Gaius meant by "trophies." The Roman controversialists (and many others) naturally take it to mean "tombs," partly no doubt because Proclus, the heretic aforesaid, had spoken of the burial-places of Philip and his four daughters, but even more because that understanding fits in with the present exhibition of structures believed to cover the tombs of the respective Apostles in the places indicated. But to the Roman a *tropaeum* commonly meant a memorial, primarily of armour hung on a sort of cross, erected on the site of a victory.[1] There is nothing but the later assignment of the tombs of the Apostles to interfere with the more natural understanding that the trophies of Gaius denoted the places where the Apostles were martyred rather than their tombs. But whether we take the trophies to be marks of the places of execution or of burial makes little difference for the purposes of our present discussion.

It would appear to the classicist no proof at all of the alleged fact in that, a century and a half thereafter, when the late statement that the Apostles had been martyred in Rome had been widely disseminated and received, pious Romans should be found attaching the story to some particular localities. That is a commonplace in the perpetuation of historical myths everywhere and in all ages, even down to our own more critical days. The pagan city of Rome was full of such things.[2] Similar identifications occur by the

[1] Among Christian writers, cf. for this definition Tertullian, *Apol.* 16; *Ad Nat.* 12.

[2] For a single example, the story that the gods Castor and Pollux rode into Rome after the battle of Lake Regillus and announced the victory, is of hoary antiquity. In proof of it the Romans pointed to the Fountain of Juturna as the place where they bathed and watered their weary horses. The spring still flows, as it did in ancient times. It may be seen to-day. But the assignment of the place and the marking of it by memorials that yet remain, though in ruin, is no witness to the truth of the circumstantial narrative. That it was "a unanimous and uncontested ancient tradition" is nothing to the point.

score in early Christian literature and history. The only difference between them and this particular one is that the others are not concerned with any tale that in modern days is regarded as of any importance whatever. Therefore they are cheerfully relegated by all critics to the limbo of pure myths. But this one narrative concerns the two greatest of all the Apostles, and came to be of the utmost importance as used to support the claim of the Roman Church to pre-eminence over all others. Therefore the great attention paid to it. But that does not necessarily differentiate it in point of truth from the other examples of its class that are now regarded as fabrications.

But it is reasonable to require of a doubter his explanation of the cause why these particular localities were pitched upon as the sites of the death (or burial, or both) of the two Apostles. The answer is easy to give. Before Gaius wrote, the belief had already been promulgated and established that Sts. Peter and Paul had suffered the death of martyrs in Rome, and in the reign of Nero. Naturally enough the occasion of Nero's persecution of Christians after the Great Fire was taken to be the time of these martyrdoms also. The Vatican gardens of Nero were known to be the place of his crucifixion of Christians. To that locality was accordingly assigned the crucifixion of St. Peter. But the newly formed "tradition" stated that St. Paul, a Roman citizen and in military ward, was beheaded. A place outside the walls of Rome on the Ostian road was taken to be the site of his death, probably because it was known to be the ordinary place for such executions at the time when the story gained this local colour.

It is not impossible that in the time of Nero friends or relatives of executed criminals might be granted permission to retrieve their bodies and bury them. To be sure, earlier Roman procedure had regarded the deprivation of the right of burial as part of the capital

penalty; but the growth of humane feeling was now leading to a relaxation of this severity, though instances of the stricter primitive usage can be cited from the first century after Christ. Ulpian (*Dig.* xlviii. 24) remarks that in his day the burial of such bodies, or, in case of executions by burning, of collected bones and ashes, was not permitted unless by consent asked and granted, and this consent was sometimes refused, especially in the case of persons executed for treason. But he says that Augustus declared in the tenth book of his autobiography that he had never denied burial under such circumstances; and Ulpian gives his own judgement that in no such cases is burial to be refused. Paulus (*ibid.*) says simply that bodies of executed criminals are to be handed over to any one who asks them for burial. There is no serious trouble on this score with the belief that the bodies of the Apostles were recovered by their Christian brethren and duly entombed. But that theoretical possibility, of course, contributes no evidence at all for the truth of the series of alleged facts.

From the time of Gaius onward, the belief that the actual locality in Rome of the graves of the two great Apostles was known and identified in each case beyond a doubt, was universally accepted. What reason was there for raising any question about it? The bodies were said to have been disinterred in the second century and conveyed for greater security to the catacombs, where they remained for a number of years, though it was also believed that they were later returned to their original resting-places. But the history of these matters, which is somewhat involved, need not be considered here. It is enough to point out that from the early part of the third century the ill-founded belief that the Church of Rome knew and guarded the burial-places of its Apostolic founders was accepted, and became "a unanimous ancient tradition." Yet the assertion of Gaius after a dead silence of a

century and a half from the alleged events (so far as extant literature is concerned), made at a time when the possession of Apostolic tombs had come to be regarded as evidence of the possession of Apostolic doctrine, is testimony of no value whatsoever for the identity of the localities or the reality of the events alleged to be thus commemorated.

It will be convenient to mention here two other documents that have been supposed to bear witness to the early existence of the story of St. Peter's residence and death in Rome, and so to its truth.

The *Ascension of Isaiah* is a Jewish apocalypsis to which Christian additions have been made. In one of these later portions (iv. 2, 3) it is prophesied that in the last days a certain great spirit of evil, Beliar, " the king of this world," will descend to earth as Antichrist. He is to come,

" in the likeness of a lawless king, slayer of his mother : who himself, this king, will persecute the plant which the Twelve Apostles of the Beloved shall plant, and one of the Twelve will be given over into his hands."

In the phrase *τῶν δώδεκα εἷς*, the last word is indeed a conjectural addition of Professor Charles in a space in the Greek text of three missing letters, but the emendation is very probably right; the verb in the singular certainly appears to preclude *δύω*, and it is doubtful in any case whether St. Paul would be reckoned among The Twelve. The phrasing in the other ancient versions of the *Ascension* (the Greek is doubtless the original), though not precisely the same as this, is not in disaccord with it.

The lawless king who slew his mother and shall persecute the Church is certainly Nero, the reference being to the popular belief that Nero was not really dead, but would return, resume his throne, and take vengeance on his enemies. The figure of Nero as Antichrist is familiar in other apocalypses (Sibyllines) as well as perhaps in the Book of Revelation. The one

of the Twelve who is to be delivered into his hands is generally understood to mean St. Peter, and this is probably the true interpretation, in spite of the incongruous fact that Beliar-Nero is to return to earth in "the last days" before the second coming of Christ, and this new incarnation of Nero presumes that the real Nero finished his reign at some time in the past. We must at least assume that the seer confuses the actual reign of Nero with the prophesied reign of Beliar in the form of Nero: for what one of the Twelve could survive till this future reign of Antichrist, unless we are to imagine embodied here an allusion to some fantastic form of the legend that St. John was not to die before the second coming of his Master? But, assumed that the reference is to the past execution of St. Peter, the only question of importance at the present moment is concerned with the date of composition of this part of the Christian insertion into the *Ascension*.[1] If the date is, as Dr. Charles would have it, between A.D. 88 and 100, there would be in this passage of the *Ascension* a quasi-certification that the belief about St. Peter's death was held within a short period after the alleged event, and therefore very much earlier than the tracing of the development of the story through other documents would lead us to believe. But the arguments advanced for assigning this part of the *Ascension* to so early a time appear to rest mainly on the idea that the passage must have been written while the popular belief that Nero would return was yet active, and that this must have died away before the end of the first century.[2] But when the idea had once been taken

[1] See, among other writings, R. H. Charles, *The Ascension of Isaiah* (critical edition of the text, translation, and commentary); Zeller, "Der Märtyrertod des Petrus in der Ascension Jesaiae," in *Zeits. f. wiss. Theol.* xxxix. (1896), pp. 558 ff.; Harnack, *Gesch. d. altchr. Litt.* ii. 1, pp. 573 ff. The Greek text of a considerable fragment of the *Ascension* was discovered on a papyrus manuscript in Egypt, and first published by Messrs. Grenfell and Hunt in 1900 (*The Amherst Papyri*, Part I.).

[2] Professor Carl Clemen (in *Zeits. f. wiss. Theol.* xxxviii. (1896), pp. 388 ff.) would even ascribe this passage of the *Ascension* to A.D. 64–68. Professor Harnack,

into apocalyptic literature, first Jewish and then Christian, it is certainly not necessary or reasonable to suppose that any dateless document in which it is embodied must be no later in composition than the period of those writings that first contained it. We may assign to the wandering treatise such a date as other circumstances appear to recommend, and these certainly point to a time no earlier than the very end of the second or the early part of the third century.[1] At that time the story that St. Peter suffered death under Nero had been accepted. The date of the *Ascension*, therefore, as thus assigned, does not interfere at all with the otherwise evident second-century origin and development of the belief in St. Peter's residence and death in Rome.[2]

The other document referred to above is the sometime popular treatise known generally as the *Preaching of Peter* (*κήρυγμα Πέτρου*). With regard to this book one may read in the work of a recent Anglican writer as follows:

"One of these apocryphal documents we have in a very early form—the Ebionite 'Preaching of Peter'—which was produced in the first decade of the second century; as a proof of its early date it may be mentioned that it was used by Heracleon in Hadrian's time. The work bears on the face of

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on the other hand (*loc. cit.*), holds that though the Christian addition of the *Ascension of Isaiah* to the earlier Jewish *Martyrdom of Isaiah* may with some probability be assigned to the second century, the apocalyptic vision (in which belongs the passage with which we are here concerned) contains no indications that justify the attribution of it to so early a date, though it must have been inserted in the compound document by the middle of the third century, since it was used in the Vercelli *Actus Petri cum Simone*, which was written at the latest about this time.

[1] Note such things as the Gnostic symptoms; the probable exclusion of St. Paul from the number of the Apostles (the belief that he suffered martyrdom under Nero is precisely as early as the same belief about St. Peter: why are not two mentioned instead of one? unless we have here an Ebionite trace); the extreme prevalence of heresies; the existence of those who claim to be God (cf. the Simon-Magus myth); the apparently recognised differentiation between presbyter and bishop (iii. 27, 29); and the general resemblance in tone to the pseudo-Clementines.

[2] If it were necessary otherwise to attribute a much earlier date to this passage of the *Ascension*, it might yet be possible that in the revamping to which the document in its present form has apparently been subjected, this reference to "one of The Twelve" was added in accordance with that later belief.

it testimony to the fact that Peter did labour and preach in Rome, for it was written at a time when some of those who actually saw and heard him may have been still alive." [1]

I was at first utterly at a loss to divine on what the author could have founded these surprising statements. Then I remembered that he frequently cites Comm. Rodolfo Lanciani as an inerrant authority, not merely on facts of archaeological discovery, but also on the deductions from and amplifications of such facts. I therefore turned to Lanciani's *Pagan and Christian Rome*, and found there (p. 124), sentence for sentence and fact for fact, if not precisely word for word, what Mr. Edmundson had later set down. Comm. Lanciani was manifestly Mr. Edmundson's chosen source for these critical judgements of early Christian literature. It appears likely that Comm. Lanciani (and therefore also Mr. Edmundson) never could have examined the extant fragments on which he based his declarations and inferences.

The treatise itself is not in existence as a whole. We have from it probably only ten short fragments, preserved almost solely in the *Stromateis* of Clement of Alexandria.[2] They are of theological (apparently apologetic) content. They do not appear to have anything Ebionite about them, but quite the contrary. One of them is strongly anti-Jewish. So far are they from assuming, or being based on, the existence of a belief in the labours of St. Peter at Rome, that there is no intimation in them that looks in the direction of any local origin, or suggests anything about the circumstances of the preacher. They are as barren in that respect as the definitions in a dictionary. Heracleon may have used the *κήρυγμα*; Origen says he did (*Comm. in Ioh.* xiii. 17); but probably no competent scholar would now assign Heracleon to

[1] George Edmundson, *The Church in Rome in the First Century*, pp. 54 f.

[2] For text and discussion see Ernst von Dobschutz, *Das Kerygma Petri*, in the Gebhardt-Harnack *Texte und Untersuchungen*, xi. 1 (1894), pp. 1-162.

the age of Hadrian, an error that may have had its starting-point in a fantastic story by Praedestinatus (*Haer.* xvi.) that connected Heracleon with the time when Alexander was bishop of Rome, and therefore with the early second century. Whence Lanciani got his strange notions, I cannot tell; but probably ultimately through some one's confusion of the *Preaching of Peter* with some other pseudo-Petrine book that properly belonged in the general family of the false *Clementines*, and was accordingly of a much later date than the *Preaching*. At all events, we may drop the *Preaching of Peter* from our further consideration, as offering no contribution toward the settlement of the question whether there is anywhere in existence any valid historical evidence that St. Peter ever visited Rome.

As regards the *Clementines* themselves, it may be of interest to note that neither *Homilies* nor *Recognitions* (the scene of both is laid entirely in the East) contains more than the scantiest and most incidental intimation of any supposed connection between St. Peter and Rome. There is one reference only in each treatise: *Hom.* i. 16 μεταλαμβάνων τῶν τῆς ἀληθείας λόγων ὧν κατὰ πόλιν ποιεῖσθαι μέλλω, μέχρι Ῥώμης αὐτῆς; *Recogn.* i. 74 *quae uero supersunt audies, usquequaque Deo fauente perueniatur ad ipsam, quo iter nostrum dirigendum credimus, urbem Romam.* Even these have the aspect of later sewed-on patches. But in the *Letter of Clement to St. James* of Jerusalem, St. Peter shortly before his death appoints Clement as his successor, definitely makes him bishop, installs him in his own "chair of discourse," and gives him expressly his own power of binding and loosing. In this tract St. Peter cannot have been regarded as anything other, one would think, than the actual bishop of Rome. And here, or in some similar narrative, we probably have the starting-point of the later developed belief that St. Peter was not merely the first and actual bishop of Rome, but

passed on to his successors in that see the divine authority vested in him to rule and instruct the universal Church. It is not, one would think, a historical source to which the modern adherents of the belief concerned could point with entirely complacent satisfaction.

Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* took for his main source in the matter of the Roman episcopal succession Irenaeus. Accordingly for Eusebius Sts. Peter and Paul were the founders of the Church of Rome, and Linus was the first bishop after their martyrdom (*H.E.* iii. 2), or, as Eusebius says a bit later, the first after Peter (iii. 4). Twelve years thereafter Linus passed on the episcopate to Anencletus (iii. 13), and he, twelve years later yet, to Clemens (iii. 15). And so, from passage to passage, each in its appropriate place, the catalogue of Roman bishops goes on, according to the list in Irenaeus, which Eusebius later transcribes substantially in full (v. 6). In one place (iii. 4) Clement is called plainly the third bishop of Rome, without any express reference to the starting-point of the series. It is evident that Eusebius, like Irenaeus, did not regard St. Peter as the first bishop of Rome. But he says that in the days of Claudius, Simon Magus (whom Eusebius supposes he is following Irenaeus in identifying with the Simon treated of by Justin) came to Rome, and in the same reign divine Providence directed Peter thither to combat the heresiarch (*H.E.* ii. 14); and in Rome both Peter and Paul suffered death under Nero, the former being crucified, the latter beheaded (ii. 25).

But the Eusebian *Chronicles* relate a story differing from this in one important detail. Syncellus, whose close dependence on Eusebius is well known, says merely (and perhaps may be understood to be giving therein all that he found in the *Chronicles*) that " Peter, the chief [of the Apostles], founded the first Church in Antioch, and then departed to Rome to preach the

Gospel; and he, after the Church in Antioch, first presided over (*πρῶτος προέστη*) the Church in Rome until his death" (627. 7). But the Latin version made by Jerome says, "The Apostle Peter, when he had first founded the Church of Antioch, is sent to Rome, where, preaching the Gospel, he continues as bishop of that city (*eiusdem urbis episcopus perseuerat*) twenty-five years." The Armenian version (I must trust herein a Latin translation of it) differs from the Hieronymian in the number of years, giving twenty instead of twenty-five, but otherwise agrees (*commoratur illic antistes ecclesiae*).[1] In his *De Viris Illustribus* (c. 1), Jerome says essentially the same thing as in the *Chronicles*: Simon Peter, after his episcopate in Antioch (*post episcopatum Antiochensis ecclesiae*), and his preaching to the Dispersion in the provinces mentioned in the address of his First Epistle, "proceeds to Rome in the second year of Claudius to combat Simon Magus, and there for twenty-five years filled the sacerdotal chair (*cathedram sacerdotalem tenuit*) up to Nero's last year, that is, his fourteenth": by Nero he was crucified head downward.

This is the first clear enunciation in extant Catholic literature (I exclude, though the ancients did not, the Clementine stories as Ebionite) that St. Peter had been the first bishop of Rome.

The *Chronicles* of Eusebius are judged to have been written only a year or so before his *Ecclesiastical History*, the former in A.D. 324, the latter in 325. It is very difficult to believe that he would make such a definite statement about a Roman episcopate of St. Peter in one year, and in the very next go calmly back, without another word, to the following of Irenaeus and the forms of statement that not merely ignore but implicitly deny the existence of such an episcopate.

[1] The discrepancy between the two versions regarding the year of Claudius to which the arrival of St. Peter in Rome is assigned is of no importance for our present discussion; and all the other chronological questions concerning the life and death of the two Apostles in Rome may also be disregarded here.

Nor would it be much easier to explain the contradiction, if we could believe the *Chronicles* to have been composed after the *History* instead of before it. A year would appear to be too short a time in which to effect the conversion in some unaccountable manner of the experienced historian from a denial of to a belief in the episcopate of St. Peter at Rome. One might rather be inclined to think that Syncellus did not omit from his report of Eusebius, or modify, the statement that St. Peter was actual bishop of Rome, but simply did not find it in the *Chronicles*; and that the insertion was made by Jerome in his version on his own responsibility, and this modification affected the Armenian version, or perhaps rather the vanished Syriac translation, which is supposed to have been the immediate source of the Armenian.

A reason why Jerome should thus alter the statement of Eusebius is readily found. Eusebius was of the East; Jerome, though born in Dalmatia, was baptized at Rome, and became an ardent member of the Church of that city. The warmth of his devotion to its bishop, Damasus, and the flaming vigour of his conviction that whoever is out of communion with Rome is out of the Ark of Safety, off the Petrine Rock on which Christ founded His Church, may be seen in a letter that he wrote to Damasus from the East, apparently in A.D. 375 (*Ep.* 15 *ad Damasum*, in Migne *Patrol. Lat.* xxii. 356). Jerome then and thereafter was a convinced and zealous Romanist, and it was precisely this Damasus, made Patriarch of the West by a purely political appointment, who was the leader in the new forward movement in behalf of the aggrandisement of authority of the see of Rome, which reached its culmination and perfection of claim in the fifth-century pontificate of Leo.

As remarked in the preceding chapter, the Papacy (if we may use that later name for it) was planning a great and far-reaching campaign in behalf of universal

sovereignty. It had numbers and influence as the see in the old capital of the empire. It was believed to have been founded by the two greatest of the Apostles. It was the only Apostolic see of the West. Its bishop, left alone in his glory by the removal of the imperial residence, was pre-eminently the most important social, if not also political, personage of the western world. His authority had been greatly increased by the favour of Valentinian and Gratian. But in the eye of other Churches all this gave him ecclesiastically at most only a precedence of honour. Pretension to any other sort of pre-eminence in the case of his predecessors had been more than once met by plain snubs. Over against the sole Patriarch of the West stood the united Patriarchs of the East, constituted such by canonical and not purely political authority.

Moreover, Rome was declining, Constantinople growing: Italy, left practically defenceless, was threatened with irruptions of destructive barbarians: the prestige of the old capital might be seriously compromised by these new political conditions, and the size and influence of the Roman Church correspondingly reduced thereby. No one could tell what the future might bring forth in the way of untoward circumstances. If the Roman bishop would establish permanently his desired dominion over East and West alike, it must be managed by transferring his claim to authority from a political and material to a purely spiritual basis. The former was already endangered and might pass away; the latter would be enduring. As the canonical successor to the episcopate of St. Peter, on whom Christ declared that he would build his Church (for this interpretation was essential to the claim), and to whom he had committed the power of the Keys, the Roman bishop might hope in time, by patience and persistent effort, to win the victory for his see, and to establish securely a dominance hitherto unknown to the Church. The devolution from

bishop to succeeding bishop of the ordinary episcopal powers of teaching and ruling, after the analogy of the devolution of property rights from decedent to heir, had been recognised in the Church from Apostolic times. But this ordinary episcopate was held *in solidum*. It would be a better foundation for the claim of the devolution upon the occupants of the Roman see of unique powers vested in St. Peter as universal bishop, if he could be regarded as actually himself the first bishop of Rome, and conveying this extraordinary authority *extra urbem* to his lineal successors in that see, precisely as they inherited, each from his predecessor, the ordinary episcopal jurisdiction *intra urbem*.

In some such guise as this, we may not unreasonably imagine, the plans for the future shaped themselves in the minds of Damasus and his successors. The see of Rome was accordingly very glad to accept and officially adopt the pseudo-historical statements already noted as existing in the alleged letter of Clement, bishop of Rome, to James the Just, bishop of Jerusalem. They were probably found also in other apocryphal documents. No aspersions should be cast on the sincerity of the Roman ecclesiastics in their espousal of this view of the early history of their Church. An action may be politic without being insincere; and in general the early Church, after its interest in matters of its own history was once aroused, gladly accepted "historical" items from almost any source, though it continued to scan new doctrinal statements with a jealous and discriminating eye.

In an atmosphere of this sort Jerome found himself at Rome. He was a communicant in that Church, a friend and eager partisan of its bishop. The statement that St. Peter had been actually the first bishop of Rome would naturally appeal to him as being of so great importance that it should be added to the meagre and vague item in the *Chronicles* that he was translating

into Latin to make the treatise more available for the use of the Western Church, which had now forgotten its Greek.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to describe the manner in which this newly espoused, if not newly invented, belief was disseminated, or the consequences that flowed from it. It is enough to say that from the latter half of the fourth century it was the official belief of the Roman Church, and has so continued to the present day. The Eastern Churches ended with rejecting and condemning not merely it and all the doctrine founded upon it, but even the earlier and comparatively innocuous, though equally unsubstantiated, claim that St. Peter preached in Rome, and was a co-founder with St. Paul of the Roman Church.

The end of the present task has thus been reached. The late (and perfectly ingenuous) origin of the belief that connected St. Peter with Rome has been pointed out, along with the gradual accretion thereto of additional details, more of them the longer the time that had elapsed since the alleged events concerned. The story bears every mark of a myth. It is entirely lacking in support by historical evidence. The only reason why it has not been universally rejected by all competent scholars except those who are bound on their allegiance to accept and support it, is merely that it has come to be a doctrine so tremendously imposing by the age-long repetition of millions of voices, and by the grandeur of the structure that has been erected upon it. On it the Church of Rome regards herself as founded. Yet the historical base is not rock, but incoherent sand.

But while he is bound by the evidence to reject absolutely the historicity of St. Peter's mission in Rome, the classicist may yet, if he be also a Catholic Christian, pray with all his heart:

Deus Misericors, qui per Iesum Christum, filium tuum,

beato Petro, apostolo tuo, multa gratiae concessisti insignia, et ei diligentissime praecepisti ut oues tuas pasceret: Dignare, quaesumus, nobis indignissimis Spiritus Sancti illuminationem dare, ut in apostolicae confessionis petra stabiliti, nos cum illo coronam gloriae sempiternam accipiamus: Per Iesum Christum, Dominum nostrum. Amen.

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